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Allegiences

ECHOCLAN:
LEADER: Pebblestar: silver and brown she-cat with blue eyes
DEPUTY: Brownwhisker: brown Tom with green eyes
MEDICINE CAT:
Blackwave: black she-cat with ripple-like stripes across her body and orange eyes
WARRIORS: Redfoot: back tabby Tom with surprising red feet and brown eyes
Brightpelt:black She-cat with brown patches and brown eyes
Weaselgrowl: red and brown Tom with orange eyes
Bluewhisker: blue furred she-cat with blue eyes
Stormfur: grey Tom with green eyes
Yellowear:white Tom with yellow ears and paws
Greenstem: Brown she-cat with yellow eyes
Chickfluff: yellow tabby she-cat with blue eyes (apprentice: Windpaw)
Birchsky: white Tom with black stripes and green eyes
Lynxclaw: brown and white she-cat with brown eyes
Stickscrath: brown Tom with dark brown eyes and sharp claws
Nighthowl: black she-cat with icy blue eyes Apprentice: Cloudpaw
APPRENTICES: Windpaw: fast tabby she-cat with violet eyes
Cloudpaw : brown Tom with white swirled markings and brown eyes
QUEENS: Sandslip: Orange tabby she-cat with white paws and green eyes (Kits: Riverkit: silver tabby she-cat with blue eyes and Shadowkit: Black she-kit with icy blue eyes)
Wildflame: beautiful dark reddish-orange she-cat with amber eyes. (Kits: Emberkit: dark grey she-kit with dark orange eyes and Ashkit, light grey Tom with yellow eyes.
ELDERS: Smallstep: white old Tom with pinkish-red eyes
Longwhisker : she-cat with long whiskers and violet eyes

SHADECLAN
LEADER: Pondstar: black she-cat with orange eyes
DEPUTY: Hawkclaw: brown Tom with green eyes

MEDICINE-CAT: Oakpool: black she-cat tabby with violet eyes
WARRIORS:leopardspot: yellow spotted Tom with dark brown eyes
Spikepelt: black Spiky pelted Tom with yellow eyes
Mothflutter: spotted brown she-cat with orange eyes
Shadowfang: black she-cat with yellow eyes
Darksoul: dark tabby Tom with green eyes
Silentwhisper: white she-cat with brown eyes (apprentice: Dawnpaw)
Marshbelly: brown tabby with yellow eyes
APPRENTICES: Dawnpaw: light grey she-cat with electric blue eyes
Dustpaw: dark brown Tom with green eyes
QUEENS: Mistfur: silvery-grey she-cat with blue eyes (kits: silverkit: Silver she-cat with brown eyes, Shrewkit: black Tom with green eyes, Sunkit: yellow Tom with green eyes

IVYCLAN:
LEADER: Vinestar: creamy orange she-cat with green eyes
Deputy: Brokenyowl: dark Tom with grey eyes
MEDICINE-CAT: Sweetberry: reddish she-cat with Amber eyes
WARRIORS: Rabbithop: brown Tom with green eyes
Pinelily: black she-cat with orange-red eyes
Hollymist: black she-cat with green eyes
Sandspot: yellow tom with blue eyes
Petalsong: Orange she-cat with green eyes
Tawnyclaw: calico she-cat with green eyes
Blackwhisker: brown tabby Tom with black ears and brown eyes
Spiderstripe: black Tom with orange eyes
Tinywing: small white she-cat with dark brown eyes
APPRENTICES: orangepaw: Orange tabby Tom with brown eyes
Gempaw: white she-cat with green eyes
QUEENS:

STORMCLAN:
LEADER:Mudstar: dark brown tabby Tom with icy blue eyes
DEPUTY:Cloudedstorm :grey tabby she cat with blue eyes
MEDICINE-CAT: Reedpelt: red Tom with blue eyes
WARRIORS: Howlingwind: black Tom with orange eyes
Leapingfish: Orange tabby she-cat with green eyes
Smokestorm: misty grey Tom with orange eyes
Windheart: brown she-cat with piercing blue eyes

Snowocean: white Tom with grey eyes
Icefur: icy black she-cat with violet eyes
Mistshade: grey she-cat with green eyes
Scarletclaw: red Tom with blue eyes
APPRENTICES: Rainpaw: light-grey she-cat with dark blue eyes
Waterpaw: blue-grey Tom with yellow eyes
Lakepaw: blue-grey she-cat with green eyes
QUEENS: Wolftooth: grey and brown she-cat with blue eyes; expecting snowocean's kits
Brightpatch: white she-cat with ginger patches (kits: Lightningkit: yellow tabby Tom with blue eyes, Thunderkit: black Tom with grey-blue eyes)
ELDERS: Oatfur: light-brown Tom with green eyes
Greytail: grey Tom with orange eyes

CATS OUTSIDE THE CLANS:
Prince: brown Tom with brown eyes
Paws: white she-cat with blue eyes
Murky: grey Tom with blue eyes

!!!!!!AUTHORS NOTE!!!!

Thank you to T_Head24 For helping me with these names. Some of the clan things are a bit short but there are more cats than that (I'm being lazy) this book will be a series. YOULL LOVE IT (I hope...)!:)

Prologue

Pebblestar awoke in a forest. The grey light seeps through the dense tree-tops. She looks around, for something familiar. A black Tom is sitting by an oak, his cold Amber eyes meeting with her own blue ones.

"Thorntail!" She exclaimed, running towards the Tom who had been her mate.

"Hello my love." The Tom greeted her, purring. "I have a prophecy to tell you."

"What?"

"The ash of a broken heart will be vanquished by an evil glare, and a glowing ember will destroy the shadow that lies within."

"Really?" Pebblestar asked.

"That's why you woke up here." Thorntail mewed.

Pebblestar's mind raced as she thought of it. *What was the glowing ember? The ash of a broken heart? And the evil glare mustn't be true, all her cats were loyal, none would think of betraying the clan.*

"I know what your thinking." The Tom rasped.

"Great now why don't you help me figure it out?"

"I don't know what it means myself."

"Oh, thorntail!"

"I will help you, but at this moment, I know nothing."

Pebblestar quivered with desperation. "I need to know!"

"I'm sorry." The Tom began to fade.

"NO, come back! I need you!" But he was already gone.

Pebblestar awoke. She needed to talk to Blackwave, now.

Chapter 1

Emberkit sat outside the nursery, licking her dark grey paw and staring at her surroundings. The camp was beautiful. The dens were made of spiny bracken and each had a layer of thick brambles growing overtop of it.
Emberkit came to her senses as she heard her brother yowling at the top of his lungs.
"I beat you, Shadowkit and you *know* it!"
He burst into view from behind the nursery, still crowing about his victories until a grumpy looking black she-kit came around the corner.

"Not fair," She growled. "Your not supposed to kick me in the stomach."

"Shadowkit, it's fine. Just be glad you get the practice for when we're warriors! Now you know what you can do better next time!"

"I guess," Shadowkit purred. "I'm glad I have friends like you guys."
Riverkit suddenly came from the Warriors den, her bright blue eyes sparkling and silver pelt shimmering.

"Guys, you'd never guess!" She mewed happily.

"What?" Ashkit demanded.

"Birchsky promised me that he'd come and teach us some battle moves!" She mewed happily.

"Awesome!" Emberkit purred.

"When?" Ashkit asked eagerly.

"Later, at sunset, he said he'd bring some fresh-kill too!"

I have such good friends, and a great leader. Pebblestar is the greatest leader EchoClan has ever had! I'm so lucky, Emberkit thought.
She was snapped out of her thoughts as Ashkit pounced on her.

"Ashkit!" She snapped.

"What," he purred. "I'm practicing for when Birchsky comes!"

Emberkit mrowed. "Haha. Bet you can't beat this!" And pummelled at Ashkit's stomach.
He winced as she hit a weak spot and he rolled away.
Emberkit stood up and shook her pelt. "Think next time before you act," she hissed playfully. " otherwise I'll beat you every time."

It was later in the evening when Birchsky finally came, a plump vole hanging from his jaws.
His green eyes sparkled as he saw the four kits.
"Hi, kits," he purred. "I came to teach you some battle moves, just like I said I would! Are you ready?"

"Yes!" Riverkit mewled.

"Ok, watch me." He ordered.
Birchsky turned towards a leaf on the ground and flicked his tail, back and forth and pounced. He unsheathed his claws and began tearing at the huge orange leaf.
"Now you try on a denmates. Claws sheathed, of course." He nodded towards Emberkit.
She glanced nervously at her denmates, swallowed and then turned to Shadowkit.
"Go on, now," Birchsky prodded. "She won't bite; this is just practice!"

"I know... I'm just scared I'll do it wrong..." Emberkit admitted.

"It's fine," Shadowkit comforted. "This is just practice. Just remember, even if you don't do it right, it will teach you what to do next time! Plus it will help *me* practice too." She added smugly.
Emberkit didn't answer, but while Shadowkit was sticking her nose in the air, she leaped forward onto the black she-kit and pounded her with her tiny grey paws.

"Ah!" Shadowkit squeaked in surprise and went limp.
Emberkit relaxed her grip carelessly and shouted, "I win!"

"Oh no you don't!" Shadowkit kicked upwards with her hind legs and threw Emberkit into the air. For a second, the world spun around dizzily, and then Shadowkit was on top of her, crowing about her triumph.

"Good one, kits," Birchsky purred. "You both did wonderful. Just remember next time, the battles not over until the opponent is beat."

"What do you mean by *beat?"* Riverkit asked from where she sat, eating the fat vole. "Isn't that a bit unmerciful to you?"

"What do you mean?" Birchsky said gruffly.

"Never mind." Riverkit growled, just as Sandslip poked her head out and called for the kits to come inside.

Chapter 2

It had been three moons and Riverkit was confused. Her whole life she'd wanted to be a warrior- fighting rival clans and hunting food for her clan- but now... She didn't know.
It seemed like such a simple question- medicine cat or warrior- but what should she choose?
Her sister, Shadowkit, was playing outside with Ashkit and Emberkit.

"I know!" She muttered to herself. "I'll talk to Shadowkit. She always seems to know what to do!"
She raced out the nursery entrance, just to trip over Weaselgrowl's tail.
"Watch it!" He hissed. She wondered why he was by the nursery- he didn't have any kits- and then she noticed Chickfluff standing beside him.

"Wha..." Riverkit asked sleepily.

"I'm expecting kits!" The young yellow warrior explained. "I have to sleep in the nursery now. Mostly because this big fur ball over here wouldn't stop worrying." She flicked her tail playfully across Weaselgrowl's ears.

"I don't want you to get hurt." He explained.

"What a great reason to keep me locked up for so many moons." Chickfluff *mrrowed* in amusement.

The two warriors pushed past her into the nursery and she heard her mother talking to them.
A minute passed, and Sandslip came bursting out of the nursery yowling something about moss.
When she spotted Riverkit, she stopped and mewed hurriedly. "I need you to get some moss for Chickfluff, there's some around the big oak just inside the entrance of the camp. Ask Blackwave to show you how to slice it properly, I don't have any time." And then

she hurried off.

Riverkit padded to Blackwave's den and poked her head inside. Blackwave was talking to a huge black tomcat with massive red paws, whom Riverkit recognised as Redfoot.
"Can you help?" He seemed to be staring down at his paw. Riverkit gasped as she saw a huge cut on it, glistening with dark red blood.

"Yes, come into my den. I'll get a poultice of marigold and comfrey," Blackwaze told him.
The big tomcat followed Blackwaze into the den.
When Riverkit padded in, the den smelled strongly of herbs.
She looked to see Blackwave smearing a gooey poultice onto Redfoot's cut.
When she finished, she mewed. "There you go, you may want to take the rest of the day off to rest, but it will heal fast. Come back tomorrow so I can check on it."

Redfoot nodded and then walked out of the den.
"What happened to him..." Riverkit muttered to herself.

"He fell on a sharp stick," Blackwave mewed. Apparently she had heard.
"And what may I help you with today, little Riverkit?"

"I'm helping to make a nest for Chickfluff for when she has the kits," she began. "Sandslip told me to get you to show me how to slice the moss properly."

"Okay." Blackwave stood up and then mewed again. "Lead the way!"

Riverkit knew that Blackwave knew where the tree was, but all the same, put her chin head up and marched forward, Blackwave close behind.
When they had reached the tall thick tree, they paused.
Blackwave went to the tree. "Watch." She ordered.
Riverkit watched as Blackwave sliced a perfect line in the moss.
"Now you try." She mewed.

Riverkit padded forward and sliced at the moss, cutting it all into small slices.

"Nice," Blackwave purred. "Now put it into bundles. You can put one bundle in your mouth, and then tuck the other under your chin."

By the time Riverkit had finished with the nests, she headed to the fresh-kill pile to get some prey. Shadowkit, Ashkit and Emberkit were all there, gathered around a nice plump mouse.

"Hey guys, can I join you?" She asked.

"Sure," Ashkit replied.

"Where were you anyways?" Shadowkit wondered out loud. "we haven't seen you since morning."

"I was collecting moss and after that I went to see Blackwave for a while and help out." Riverkit told them.

"Ok. Anyways, we'll be apprentices soon. You should practice training with us tomorrow. We practiced fighting *all day*."

"Uh ok." Riverkit gulped. She would have a long day tomorrow.

Chapter 3

Ashkit padded out of the den entrance and yawned. His light grey fur shone in the sun.
"Hey Shadowkit!" He meowed before padding over to the slender black she-cat.

"Hey, Ashkit," she purred. "We're going to be apprentices soon! I can't wait, can you?"

"No. I wanna be a warrior now!"

Suddenly Riverkit and Emberkit padded out of the den.
"I have to go talk to Blackwave," Riverkit told her. "I'll see you later!"
After that the silver she-cat padded over to the medicine den, eyes sparkling.
Emberkit ran towards them.
"Hi, guys, are we practicing battle moves today?"

"I don't know, I wanted to do hunting crouched and leaps." Ashkit told her.

"Suit yourself," she growled before padding away again, Shadowkit following.
Ashkit didn't want to practice by himself so he went to see what Riverkit was doing.
He poked his head inside to see Riverkit mewing.
"Blackwave, I need to be a medicine cat!"

What? Riverkit wants to be a medicine cat? But she would be such a great warrior . . .

Blackwave seemed just as astonished as Ashkit, because she opened her mouth in a massive gape and then asked: "have you thought about this?"

Riverkit had her answer ready. "Yes, I've thought about it lots. I

used to like practicing battle moves with the other kits but now . . ." She said in a wistful voice. "I also really enjoy coming here to help. It makes me feel like I can do anything. And that's what you always tell me. You say to follow my heart. And I think this is where my heart lies- helping sick and hurt cats. I need this Blackwave!"

Blackwave looked at the young cat with a soft gaze. "You know, you can never have a mate or kits if you choose this path."

Riverkit just purred. "The whole *clan* will be my kits."

So that's why she always comes to the medicine den to help. She's been trying to decide for ages. If only she'd have told me. . .

"Very well, I'll talk to Pebblestar," Blackwave agreed finally. "You may go now."
Suddenly the silver she-cat burst out of the medicine den happily, but then she saw Ashkit.

"What have you been doing here?" She gasped. "Have you been *spying?*"

"Well I um I wanted to come and see you since the others are practicing battle moves when I wanted to practice hunting," He started. "But when I got here, you were talking to Blackwave."

"You know, don't you?"

"Yes, you want to be a medicine cat. But don't worry! I think you'll be a great one."

"Thank you, Ashkit. Now if you'll excuse me, I have to go tell Shadowkit I talked to Blackwave.

Chapter 4

Shadowkit was so excited. Today was the day they were becoming apprentices.
She put her chin up as her mother, Sandslip, licked every inch of her fur.
Wildflame was doing the same to Ashkit and Emberkit.
Ashkit was protesting loudly. "I don't need to look perfect, mum!"
Wildflame just purred and sighed. "I want you to look good on the day you become an apprentice.

"You haven't done *her* yet," He openly nodded at Emberkit. "and she's just as messy as me!"

"Hold still or you'll never be clean enough to be an apprentice."
That sure shut him up.

Soon Pebblestar stood on top of the High Peak. "Let all cats old enough to catch there own prey gather beneath the High Peak for a clan meeting!" She yowled.
In the minute it took for the clan to gather, Shadowkit could feel her pelt prickling in excitement.
She was going to be an apprentice!
Her sister, Riverkit seemed to know what she was thinking because she purred, "you know, you still have to become a warrior!"

Shadowkit butted her sister on the head.
"We'll lead the clan together, Riverkit, I'll be leader and you'll be medicine cat!"

"I can't wait." Riverkit purred. "Now listen, Pebblestar is starting the ceremony!"
Shadowkit stopped talking and turned to Pebblestar who had begun to speak.
"We gather here today, beneath our ancestors, for one of the most important ceremonies to the Clan."

Shadowkit gasped.

"You'll never be a warrior if all you do is talk!" Lynxclaw hissed from somewhere behind her.
Pebblestar was looking down at her Clan with a disappointed look. "As I was saying," she continued. "We are gathered for a very important ceremony, the ceremony of new apprentices,"

This time it was Ashkit who made the noise. "I hope I get someone good!" His tail was held high above his head.

Pebblestar continued irritably, staring at the four kits. "But if they don't *want* to be apprentices, I *can* arrange that."
All four apprentices slapped their tails over their mouths.
"These four kits have reached their sixth moon with the Clan and it is time they became apprentices.
Ashpaw, come forward."

The light grey tomcat scampered forward, his yellow eyes sparkling. "Ashkit, from this moment on, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Ashpaw. Greenstem will be your mentor."
The she-cat padded forward from the crowd and Ashpaw touched noses with her.

"Emberkit, come forward." Pebblestar meowed. The dark grey she-cat ran forward.
"Emberkit, from this moment on, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Emberpaw. Your mentor will be Weaselgrowl."
Emberpaw winced at this. Shadowkit could understand why. Weaselgrowl was a good warrior, but his words were sharp and his eyes seemed as though he was looking right through you. Surprisingly, he looked soft and friendly as he padded forward to touch noses with Emberpaw.
"I'll train you well," He promised her. "Just cooperate and we'll be the best warriors in the clan!"

"Ok!" Shadowkit heard Emberpaw mew. "I'll be awesome! I'll be your favourite apprentice ever!"

"I'm sure you will." He replied.

Pebblestar started mewing again, and this time it was *her* name that

was called.
"Shadowkit, come forward."

Shadowkit now understood how Ashpaw and Emberpaw had felt as they padded forward- the whole clan was staring and Shadowkit could feel the eyes piercing her fur. As she climbed the rock, she kept wondering if she'd make it to the top or fall.

"Shadowkit," Pebblestar purred. "From this moment on, until you have earned your warrior name, you will be know. as Shadowpaw. I have watched you from the day you were born. You have stealth in stalking and great reflexes. That is why *I* will be your mentor."

Shadowpaw felt surprised. She wasn't any different then her friends and sister, so why did *she* get the special treatment of having the clan leader for a mentor? She leaned forward to touch noses and then scampered away.

"And lastly, Riverkit," Pebblestar mewed. "It is your wish then, to become a medicine cat? To walk with StarClan and heal your clanmates?"

Riverkit nodded.
"Then from this moment on, until you receive your Medicine Cat Name you shall be known as Riverpaw, and Blackwave will be your mentor.
Riverpaw confidently touched noses with her new mentor.
Then the clan began to cheer as loud as they could.
"Ashpaw, Emberpaw, Shadowpaw, Riverpaw!"

Chapter 5

Emberpaw was brimming with happiness. She had just become an apprentice!
Weaselgrowl stood beside her and mewed in her ear.
"Let's go and explore the territory."

Emberpaw nodded eagerly. "Can Ashpaw and Shadowpaw come too?" She asked.

Weaselgrowl shook his head. "No, I'm sorry but their mentors will have other stuff to do with them. And if we go alone, we can get used to each other."

Emberpaw mewed. "I guess."

"Follow me," Weaselgrowl jerked his head toward the camp entrance. "we have a lot of stuff to get through."
Weaselgrowl's voice sounded wise and calm, not at all like the grumpy short-tempered tomcat she had heard.
They padded out if the camp to see the forest.
"Wow . . ." Emberpaw breathed in astonishment. "This is amazing! I can see so much!"

Weaselgrowl gave a loud *mrrow* of amusement. "This is hardly anything. Come on, I'll show you the interesting stuff."
As she followed him through the trees they came across a tall, thick tree. The trunk was rough and the leaves were dense and green.
She couldn't contain herself as she hurled herself up the tree.
Before she knew what she was doing, she was halfway up the massive tree, and she could hear Weaselgrowl yowling. "What are you doing, you crazy mouse-brain," at the top of his lungs.
Emberpaw froze, her paws seemed to be stuck onto the tree.
"Help!"

Weaselgrowl rolled his eyes before clambering up the tree after her.
"Next time listen to what I say." He growled through clenched teeth before grabbing her by the scruff and hauling her down.

"Sorry," She squealed. "I . . . I don't know what I was doing! It was like the tree was calling to me . . ."

Weaselgrowl stuck his face a mouse-length away from her. "I don't care what you felt like. You could've been hurt." And with that he stalked away with Emberpaw close behind.

Chapter 6

Riverpaw was sorting through herbs. Quietly she named them. "Chervil . . . Chamomile . . . Catmint . . ." She paused to give the catmint a good sniff to check that it was good. Catmint was very important.
Blackwave poked her head in the den, her blue eyes glazed with worry.
"Are you doing ok?" She asked.

"Yes, fine. We need more tansy and burdock though. Do you think maybe I can go and look for some later?" Riverpaw told her.

"Maybe. Right now I have to deal with Pebblestar. She has white-cough."

"All the more reason to get tansy," Riverpaw muttered. "She'll need it to get better."

When Blackwave had left, Riverpaw waited a few heartbeats before sneaking after her.
She poked her head out of the medicine den just as Blackwave's tail vanished into Pebblestar's den.
She padded quietly over to the den and listened from outside.
Pebblestar was coughing. "I don't know, what to," she broke of in a fit of coughing. "do, about Brownwhisker."

"There, there Pebblestar. He's an ambitious warrior but that doesn't mean he wants to plot against you! A lot of deputies do that sort of thing."
Blackwave mewed.

What kind of thing? Am I missing something? I don't know what it would be. Maybe Brownwhisker has been walking around with his nose in the air pretending he's leader already. That would do it.

"Do you think, I can't tell, when a warrior is acting, strange . . ." She coughed. "All he wants, to do lately, is, go out, into the forest, not

for patrols and not for hunting. Something else." Pebblestar growled.

"That doesn't mean he's doing anything bad!" Blackwave protested. At that moment Pebblestar coughed again. "Riverpaw, we know your out there, come in.
Riverpaw startled. *How had they known?*
Riverpaw pushed her way through the bramble screen into the den. Pebblestar was lying on her nest. Her blue eyes were dull. A bundle of fresh catmint sat beside her. Blackwave left as she entered. "Riverpaw . . . How are you?" She asked.

"Good," Riverpaw told her. "Blackwave is a great mentor and I love learning about herbs! I'm happy to be a medicine cat."

"I'm glad you say that," Pebblestar let out a purr so loud Riverpaw could see her fur vibrating. "A lot of kits think that being a medicine cat is weak and make fun of their littermates when they want to be one. Did that happen to you?"

Riverpaw shook her head. "No, Shadowpaw was completely supportive. She wants what's best and she knows I wanted to be a medicine cat really bad. She helped me, too. I was scared to ask Blackwave at once. I confided in Shadowpaw and she told me that she thought that everycat should do what their heart tells them too. And she knew my heart was set on being a medicine cat."

"Shadowpaw is a brilliant young cat. I would know, I'm mentoring her. She seems to always care about what other cats want. She'll be a great warrior."

Riverpaw dipped her head. "Thank you." She mewed before padding out of the den.

Chapter 7

Ashpaw was eating a mouse. Beside him, Windpaw told her story. "I'm half-clan." She started. She didn't even seem to mind. "And I'm proud. I know most other cats think being half-clan is bad and all and that the kits are a mistake, but I don't think so. Cats tell me you don't choose who you love, but your heart does. So maybe some cats hearts tell them to look somewhere else. And that's what happened to my mother. She fell in love with an IvyClan cat- Blackwhisker."
All the apprentices around the mouse gave a gasp of shock.

"Ashpaw, you know my mother well." He continued.

"I do?" Ashpaw asked.

"Yes. She's Greenstem."

Ashpaw was surprised. His own mentor had kits with a cat from another Clan?"
"I didn't know that . . ."

Cloudpaw snorted. "Windpaw we both know that's not how it happened. Technically were not half-clan because Blackwhisker was living here when we were born. He just left because he's a mange-ridden excuse of a warrior who thought he could get away with it. If I ever meet him in battle, I'll take him down."

"What do you mean? Blackwhisker used to live here?" Shadowpaw asked.

"Yes. He's Brownwhisker's brother. And Brownwhisker is a better father then he ever was."
Cloudpaw was looking at the large brown tom with a look in his eyes that Ashpaw could understand. It was love.
"Are Greenstem and Brownwhisker mates now?" Emberpaw asked while at the same time, Ashpaw muttered. "Why did Blackwhisker leave?"

Cloudpaw sighed. "Yes, Emberpaw. And I wish Brownwhisker was our father instead. Ashpaw, he left because he was a big fox-heart and thought Windpaw and I were to ugly."

"Seriously?" Shadowpaw sounded surprised. "I'm sorry. I can't imagine what it would be like not to have a proper father."

Both Windpaw and Cloudpaw bristled at this.
"We do have a proper father!" Windpaw snarled.

"We *have* Brownwhisker!" Cloudpaw hissed before stalking away, pulling his sister with him.

A heartbeat later Brightpelt, Windpaw's mentor since Chickfluff had moved into the nursery, burst into the den, her fur bristling and then asked, "what is going on in here?"

"Shadowpaw said something to Windpaw and Cloudpaw." Riverpaw who had arrived a minute ago, told her.

"What did you say?" Brightpelt asked.

"I said the wrong thing, that's all." Shadowpaw mewed.

"Seriously, Shadowpaw, just tell her!" Emberpaw mewed tensely.

"I said that I felt bad they never had a proper father." Shadowpaw signed. "Like I said, it was the wrong thing to say! I didn't want to hurt their feelings."

"Well you did so you can go and say sorry to them, right now." Brightpelt ordered.

"Ok." Shadowpaw muttered before padding out of the den, her black tail dragging on the ground.

Ashpaw sat in his nest, slowly breathing. The other apprentices were around him, including Windpaw and Cloudpaw who had came back, still upset and huffily lay down in their nests.
When he closed his eyes, he soon feel asleep and awakened in a starry world.

"Hello?" He called, wondering if any cat was around.
He was in a huge field of flowers of all colours.
In the middle of the field, a huge tree sat.
Just like the Tall Birch, He thought. Leaves were falling from the tree in a swift, clean motion. It looked like the leaves were cutting through the air.
A branch clattered to Ashpaw's right and he jumped.
A deer bounded across the field, stopping to prick its tall ears in every direction before moving on.
When it reached the edge of the field it paused again.
It's big brown eyes looked around until they spotted him, and then the strangest thing happened. The deer *bowed.*
As it left, a sparkling trail of stardust spilled from its feet and as it made its way into the forest, it vanished completely.
Then, he heard a call.
A silver tabby was pounding towards him.
"Ashpaw, Ashpaw!" It yowled.
Ashpaw didn't know what to expect as the silver tabby hurled herself towards him.
What is happening to me? I feel as if . . . I don't even know. This place isn't reality though, is it?
"I'm Silverecho," the silver tabby stated. "I have to tell you something," her voice broke a little and her bright eyes seemed sad. "Young Ashpaw. You have a hard destiny. Something will happen that you can't reveal, no matter what happens. She can't tell anyone either."

Before Ashpaw asked who "she" was Silverecho was trotting away. Ashpaw didn't even call after her.
Suddenly a paw prodded his side and he mewed. "Silverecho, stop! Just 'cause I'm still here doesn't mean you have to poke me!"

A voice around him sounded confused. "Silverecho? Who's that?"
Suddenly Ashpaw blinked open his eyes to see Greenstem standing above him.
"Seriously, Ashpaw. You need to wake up for training! And don't tell me this Silverecho is a cat from another Clan."

"Sorry." He grumbled. He got to his feet and padded after Greenstem.

When they reached the Training Hollow, Ashpaw was ready to do whatever they would be doing.
"Are we practicing battle moves?" Ashpaw asked eagerly.

Greenstem nodded. "Yes, we'll be training with the other apprentices."
Ashpaw yowled happily and padded into the training hollow

Chapter 8

Shadowpaw was hunting. It was her first assessment, and she sniffed the air.
She caught the scent of shrew a little to her right and perked her ears up. It was scrabbling around a tree, taking small seeds and nuts into its den.
Shadowpaw got into a hunters crouch and began to move forward, placing one paw carefully in front of the other.
Soon she had reached the shrew. She waggled her rump and pounced, snapping its tiny spine easily beneath her paws.
Shadowpaw's eyes glittered as she buried the shrew with the rest of her catches.
So far she had caught two mice and the shrew.

A happy warbler was singing its morning song as it sat high in a tree.
Ok, this will be a bit harder. I'll need to climb the tree and sneak up on it without it flying away- I have to be fast.
As Shadowpaw hurried up the tree, the bird didn't seem to notice anything.
It's back was turned and its soft feathers ruffling as it preened.
But as she put her paw on the branch, the warbler startled, spreading its wings out. Shadowpaw was too fast for the bird. She captured its wings under her paws as she sprang and snapped its spine.

Shadowpaw missed the branch on her way down and started to fall.
"Nooooo!" She yowled. Suddenly Pebblestar, her mentor, burst out of a bush and ordered. "Try and catch the other branches in the way down!"

As hard as she tried, she couldn't grab a branch and landed on the ground with a crunch.
Pebblestar gasped. "Are you ok? We should get you back to the camp. Come on."

"No I'm fine," Shadowpaw insisted, though as she put her weight on

the injured leg, she shot it straight back into the air. "Ok, maybe I'm not, but can we at least get my prey?"

Pebblestar nodded and bounded off to get her other prey. When she returned carrying the two mice and shrew, Shadowpaw leaned on her shoulder and they began to limp back to the camp.
When they arrived, Pebblestar mewed. "You should go to the medicine den to see Blackwave. You'll need to get that shoulder back into place.
Shadowpaw limped into the medicine den, where she was greeted by Riverpaw.

"Oh, my what happened Shadowpaw?" Her sister asked, worry glittering in her blue eyes.

Shadowpaw didn't answer, just shook her head.
"Oh come on, Shadowpaw, I can't help you unless I *know*!"

"Fine," Shadowpaw gave in. "I fell out of a tree catching a stupid bird."

At that moment Blackwave burst into the den. "I heard Shadowpaw was hurt so I-" she broke off as she realised that Shadowpaw was already in the den.
Blackwave stepped forward and sniffed at her shoulder. Then she put her paw on it and rolled it around.
Shadowpaw yelped in pain. "What are you *doing*?"

"I'll need to wrench it back into place. Keep still. It will hurt, so be prepared. Riverpaw, you can start making the poultice to put on afterward."
Blackwave put her paw on Shadowpaw's shoulder again and braced her other paw against her side.
Just as Shadowpaw was about to ask what was taking so long, she felt a ripping pain in her shoulder as it was pushed back into place.
"You'll have to stay here for a few days," Blackwave ordered. "We don't want you to get hurt again.

As Blackwave left, Riverpaw came back, with slimy yellow stuff wrapped in a leaf.
"It's comfrey and marigold," She explained. "It should help with the

pain."

"Thanks." Shadowpaw mewed before drifting off to sleep.

Chapter 9

It was Emberpaw's first Gathering tonight and she was excited.
Around her, cats were gathering at Pebblestar's call.
She had called them together to announce who would be going to the Gathering.
Her cough was gone now so she talked loud and clear.
"To the Gathering tonight I will be taking Brownwhisker, Weaselgrowl, Greenstem, Wildflame, Cloudpaw, Emberpaw, Ashpaw and Blackwave. Riverpaw has asked to stay behind to take care of her sister, Shadowpaw, who is still injured." She flicked her tail to dismiss the meeting.
The cats murmured in agreement at the cats to be chosen.
Emberpaw spotted her mother's fiery pelt blazing in the sun-high light and raced over towards her.

"Are you excited for your first gathering?" Her mother asked calmly.

"Yes, I'm looking forward to meeting some other cats." Emberpaw told her.

"Yes, that's good. Just be sure not to give away to much information; you won't always be friends."

"I'll be sure to be careful. If you want I can pass the message on to Ashpaw. You know how he is. Always boasting about things that he's done."

Her mother purred in amusement. "Yes, he'd probably tell them all exactly how to get to camp in one of his detailed stories about how he got lost as a kit."

Emberpaw mewed in agreement. "Yeah, even though we both know that didn't happen."
Emberpaw gave her mother a parting lick and then drew away to tell Ashpaw.
Brownwhisker was sitting by the fresh-kill pile and as Ashpaw and Emberpaw trotted over to grab some prey, he said, "Make sure you

get some rest today before the gathering. We don't want tired apprentices tomorrow!"

Ashpaw nodded in agreement as they grabbed a small bird and went to sit outside the den to eat.
Emberpaw purred. "I'm so excited. I want to meet al the cats in all the Clans!"

"I know," Ashpaw agreed. "but we won't be able to. It's too bad really, but I'm sure we'll meet a lot of cats."

As Emberpaw gulped down her last mouthfuls of bird and picked the feathers from her teeth, Weaselgrowl came running over.
"Don't tell anycat anything important about us. Go with the other apprentices because the Warriors will try to manipulate you. The apprentices will want to be friends."

"Yes, we've been over this, Weaselgrowl. We'll be fine." Emberpaw assured, before closing her eyes to rest.

It seemed like only heartbeats later when Ashpaw prodded her awake and hissed in her ear. "Come on, we've got to go to the Gathering! The cats are leaving!"
Blinking the sleep from her eyes, Emberpaw stood up and padded quickly to where Pebblestar and the rest of the cats stood.
Pebblestar beckoned with her tail for them to follow.

When they reached the cliff where gatherings were held, IvyClan and Shadeclan was already there.
Cats were murmuring and talking amongst themselves.
Emberpaw caught a grumpy looking IvyClan cat talking to a ShadeClan cat.
"StormClan is always late. It's astonishing they won't hurry up even after we've told them so many times already!"

The ShadeClan cat nodded. "I agree. They really need to hurry up so we can start the Gathering."
Emberpaw let her gaze wander to the High Cliff where the leaders sat.
Pebblestar sat with her tail wrapped neatly around her paws and looked like she was talking hastily to Pondstar.

The black she-cat was glancing around nervously as they spoke. Then, a creamy orange cat jumped onto the High Cliff and then spoke.
"The Gathering had started!"

Murmurs of disapproval rippled across the clearing.
"Surely not! StormClan isn't here yet!" Redfoot yowled.

Just as tension began to break out across the clearing a large brown tom arrived, a group of cats trailing behind him.
"Finally." A cat in the crowd sighed.
The big brown tomcat climbed up to where the other three leaders were.
"Sorry that I'm late, we were held up by dogs."

"Yeah, and hedgehogs fly," Cloudpaw grunted. "StormClan is always late and making up excuses for it. *I* don't see any scratches on them, do *you?*"

"Shh!" Wildflame ordered. "Pondstar is speaking now!"

As the cats turned to the pretty black she-cat she began to speak.
"ShadeClan is doing good. We are finding good hunting this green-leaf and we have three new apprentices; Silverpaw, Sunpaw, and Shrewpaw."
All the gazes flicked to the three young cats tearing nervously at the ground.
"They are brilliant hunters already and will be a valuable tribute to our Clan."
The three young cats perked up at this.

"I'll go next." The large brown tomcat mewed.

"Mudstar." Wildflame told her.

"Our Clan has as well been doing good. Next!"

There's something he's hiding . . . I'm not sure what, but he doesn't want to tell anyone. I wonder what it could be?

Next Pebblestar spoke. "We have good hunting and are proud to welcome four new apprentices. Shadowpaw, Emberpaw and

Ashpaw will train to be Warriors, whereas Riverpaw is training to be a Medicine Cat. Shadowpaw and Riverpaw could not make it today because Shadowpaw popped her leg out of place and Riverpaw, her sister stayed behind to help her."

A few cats mewed sadly about Shadowpaw. Then Vinestar sprang up. "You have all been stealing from my terrirory!" She yowled towards the StormClan cats. "StormClan is getting out of paw, Mudstar, and you *need* to take care of it!" With that she spun around, her Clan foreign her.

"Come on, let's all go. We shouldn't stay when Vinestat has left!" Pebblestar yowled.
Cats mewed in agreement and then they left.
Pebblestar bounded off the High Cliff and flicked her tail for them to follow.

Chapter 10

Riverpaw was slapping a fresh poultice on Shadowpaw's shoulder.
"What does this even do," Shadowpaw groaned. "All it *feels* like it's doing is making my fur all stuff and gross."

Riverpaw sighed. Ever since her sister had been injured, Shadowpaw had been whinier then a mosquito buzzing in her face.
"Why can't I just do my duties already? I need to do them some day, or I'll be behind and Emberpaw and Ashpaw will be Warriors before me."

Riverpaw but back a sharp retort as she chewed up some more comfrey.
"Well, I'm sorry you feel that way, but wrenched shoulders don't heal overnight." Riverpaw growled.
She should at least be thankful that I'm trying *to help. If I was in her place I'd be so glad to have a Medicine Cat helping me. If she really thinks she can hunt with that shoulder, I'm a mouse. She'd probably collapse after five steps out of the camp.*

"When can I hunt again?" Shadowpaw asked.

"When I say you can!" Riverpaw snapped, finally giving in to her temper. "I'm trying to help, and it doesn't help when you're whining in my ear the whole time about how it's not good enough! I have better stuff to do to, you know! If you want I can get Blackwave to help instead, because she's proably *so* much better."
Then Riverpaw whirled out of the den.
Shadowpaw stared after her for a few moments before yowling.
"No, Riverpaw, you know I didn't mean-"
Riverpaw didn't hear anymore, because she was gone.

As she stormed towards the fresh-kill pile she saw Blackwave hurrying towards her.
"What's the matter, Riverpaw?" Blackwave asked.

"Shadowpaw is being a grumpy fox and it's starting to get annoying.

All she seemed capable of doing is whining about stupid things." Riverpaw explained.

"I see . . ." Blackwave mewed. "It's proably hard for her; just when she thought all was going well, she got hurt and now she doesn't know what to do."

Riverpaw snorted. "She's not *that* hurt. She's getting better!"

Suddenly Blackwave was serious. "Riverpaw, we both know it's not okay. Shadowpaw is in danger. She might never be a warrior."

Then, both cats turned to the camp entrance as the brambles rustled and the cats who had gone to the Gathering burst in. Riverpaw searched through the cats until she spotted Emberpaw and Ashpaw and she called them over.

"What happened?" Riverpaw asked.

Ashpaw snorted. "Vinestar was grumpy with Mudstar, the StormClan leader who is apparently late every Gathering and steals prey. It wasn't really that exciting."

"Ha, well I guess Mudstar is kind of a mouse-brain- remember when we were kits? The queens always gossiped about Mudstar; saying how irresponsible he was and how they don't think he should be leading a Clan." Riverpaw reminded.
"Excuse me, I have to go and talk to Shadowpaw."

The two cats dipped their heads as she padded away.
When she reached the den, Shadowpaw looked asleep. Riverpaw sighed and turned to her own soft nest.
Just as she was about to fall asleep, she heard Shadowpaw speak.
"Riverpaw, I'm sorry. I don't like to fight with you . . . Please forgive me for being so selfish about my injury."

"Shadowpaw . . ." Riverpaw mewed. Shadowpaw gave a little jump as if she didn't know Riverpaw was still awake.
"You know I couldn't stay mad at you. I know when you were being all grumpy it was just because of your shoulder. I'm sorry too."
Riverpaw heard Shadowpaw start to purr and crawled out of her

best again and padded to Shadowpaw's. As she lay down, her sister's fluffy black coat brushed against hers and they twined their tails.
"I love you, Shadowpaw," Riverpaw mewed. "and nothing will ever stop that."

Chapter 11

Ashpaw yawned in his nest before blinking his yellow eyes open. He looked around the den and saw that Windpaw was awake, but wasn't out of her nest.
"Hi, Ashpaw," Windpaw greeted. "It's my Warrior Assessment today! Brightpelt told me that you could come and help with the fighting part. So I waited."

Ashpaw shook his pelt out and then narrowed his eyes. "Why didn't you wake me?"

"Oh, well it's not until sun-high and, well, other reasons."

Ashpaw just shrugged. He didn't care what all the she-cats secrets were.
Suddenly Windpaw's brown tabby body whisked out of the den. Ashpaw wondered for a moment if he should follow, but then decided to see if she'd come back.
Then, the slender tabby pushed her way back into the den, carrying a fluffy young squirrel. "Here, we can share this. We'll need energy for my Assessment."

"Ok," Ashpaw mewed and took a bite of the squirrel. "Thanks, by the way."

"No problem!" Windpaw purred.
When the two young cats had finished the squirrel, they padded out to see Brightpelt and Nighthowl, both looking impatient.
"Have you seen Cloudpaw?" Nighthowl asked worriedly. "I haven't seen him yet today and he can't miss his Assesment!"

Windpaw nodded. "Yes, I saw him go into the forest earlier. He said he was going hunting."
Nighthowl rolled her eyes. "I guess I'll have to go find him. Sometimes that tom is quite a pawful!"

Ashpaw *mrrowed* in amusement at this. "I wonder if anybody talks

to Emberpaw about *me* being a pawful."

Windpaw cuffed him over the ears. "Yeah, whatever, Cloudpaw is the biggest mouse-brain *in the Clan*!"

Brightpelt had started pacing now. "Are you two going to stand there and gossip all day, or are we going to Windpaw's Assessment?"

Ashpaw and Windpaw quieted. They followed the black-and-brown she-cat into the forest.
"First, well do the fighting part of the Assessment. I'm going to see how good you do on both offence and defence.
Ashpaw, you attack her first."

Ashpaw didn't hesitate as he hurled himself at the surprised she-cat. He hit her in the face with claws sheathed, and pummelled her belly with his hind paws.
Windpaw let out a faint cry of pain.
Ashpaw immediately loosened his grip. "Are you ok?" He asked worriedly.
Windpaw flashed upward at him and purred. "Oh, so you fell for it?" Before pushing him backward.
She shivered her paws against his face and he cried out in mock pain.
Windpaw leaped upward and then seemed to fly down at him, hitting his back hard with her nimble paws.
Ashpaw growled.
Then he heard Brightpelt calling. "Ok, that's good. Great job, guys!"

Windpaw immediately stopped attacking him and stepped back. She traced the tip of her tail against his spine and whispered. "Good fight. You did well." She looked deeply into his eyes with her green ones and then added. "Well for a new apprentice, anyway."
Ashpaw saw the tease in her eyes and knew not to be hurt but then hissed playfully. "I'll get you for that!"

"Ok, Ashpaw you can go back to camp. Windpaw will let you know how the rest of her assessment was when she gets back." Brightpelt told him.

Ashpaw quickly scampered away, his long light-grey tail high in the air. When he reached the camp and pushed through the thorn barrier he could hear cats arguing.
Bluewhisker, Stormpelt and Stickscratch were saying something to Pebblestar.
Ashpaw crept closer to hear what they were saying.
Stickscratch was growling. "Pebblestar, we need to patrol more along the IvyClan border. Those mange-pelts have been sneaking across the border again. Ask them," he nodded at Bluewhisker and Stormpelt. "they scented it too."

Pebblestar looked at the two cats, her gaze questioning. The two cats nodded and Pebblestar mewed. "Very well, you may go."
As the three cats were dismissed they padded away.
Ashpaw went to the fresh-kill pile to grab some prey. Pebblestar, who was still there, asked Ashpaw: "how's Windpaw's assessment going so far?"

Ashpaw blinked. "Good, I think."

"We'll have two more good warriors by sunset." Pebblestar purred. Her voice sounded weary and tired.
Suddenly Windpaw and Cloudpaw burst through the thorn barrier.
"We passed, we passed!" Cloudpaw yowled.
Windpaw caught Ashpaw's eye and she raced over.
"Great job, today," Ashpaw purred. "You did great!"

It was sunset and Pebblestar had just jumped onto the High Peak.
"Let all cats old enough to catch their own prey gather beneath the High Peak for a Clan meeting."

As cats began to pool out of dens to sit in front of the High Peak. Yellowear and Birchsky sat near the back.
The two elders; Smallstep and Longwhisker came out of their den and sat down, tails wrapped around their paws.
As Pebblestar began to speak again, Windpaw started bouncing upside down excitedly. Cloudpaw looked at his sister, his eyes sparkling.
"Brightpelt, Nighthowl, do your apprentices fulfil the needs to become a warrior?"
Brightpelt nodded while Nighthowl said, "Yes."

"Then you may come forward, Cloudpaw, Windpaw," Pebblestar mewed.
The dark brown tom walked slowly towards Pebblestar, but even though he walked calmly, Ashpaw could tell he was trembling from the excitement. Windpaw ran forward like a kit.
"Cloudpaw, Windpaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code, even at the cost of your life?"

The two young cats glanced at each other and then mewed. "I do."

"Then by the powers of StarClan you shall receive your Warrior names. Cloudpaw, from this moment on, you shall be known as Cloudswirl. StarClan honours your courage and strength and we know you will be a great warrior."
Cloudswirl touched noses with the great leader, then jumped down from the High Peak.

Then, Pebblestar spoke again. "Windpaw, from this moment on, you shall be known as Windstorm. StarClan honours your loyalty and quick-paws and knows you will serve your Clan for many moons to come."

Ashpaw was the first to yowl Windstorm's name. "Windstorm, Cloudswirl!" Then the others joined in happy yowling.
"Windstorm! Cloudswirl! Windstorm! Cloudswirl!"

The two new warriors bowed their heads.
Pebblestar spoke again, her voice loud and clear. "You will keep vigil tonight."
The two cats nodded.

Chapter 12

It was dawn. A pale grey light seeped into the medicine where Shadowpaw slept. Shadowpaw heaved herself from her nest in the medicine den with a groan.
"Will I ever be better?" She muttered under her breath.
Riverpaw purred from her nest. "Soon."
Shadowpaw didn't know that she had heard her, so she stared in shock for a moment until Riverpaw mewed again.
"Go on, do what you need. I'm not keeping you."

Shadowpaw limped from the den and across the clearing. When she arrived at the thorn barrier she pushed her way through. The two new warriors: Cloudswirl and Windstorm were still there, keeping vigil. Cloudswirl by the entrance while Windstorm circled the camp. The dark brown tomcat, Cloudswirl looked at her with dark eyes before opening his mouth. "Where are you going?" He hissed.

"Just . . . Out." How could she explain she had been swimming to strengthen her leg? That would be embarrassing. Cloudswirl lowered his gaze to hers, his muzzle brushing against the tip of her ear. "You can tell me anything." He whispered. "You know that, right?"
Shadowpaw looked into his dark gaze. The white swirls of colour on his pelt looking soft.
"Ok," Shadowpaw spoke. "I've been swimming to strengthen my leg . . . go on then, laugh."

Cloudswirl's eyes held a confused look. "Why would I laugh? It's not funny. I'll help too. Here, wait in this bush," he shoved her into a bush. "A warrior should be coming to tell us out vigil is over soon." Before she could respond, he was back patrolling in front of the barrier. Soon Redfoot pushed his way out of the barrier and growled softly. "You're vigil is over. You may come in to rest." Shadowpaw expected him to follow the senior warrior back into camp, but instead he tried to explain. "Well actually I'm . . . er . . . Hunting so, no. I'll rest later . . ."

"Well ok," Redfoot shrugged, turning back to the barrier, Windstorm stalking after him. As they passed out of sight, Cloudswirl came over to her. "Ready for some swimming?" He purred.
Shadowpaw nodded. She leaped to her paws and beckoned for Cloudswirl to follow. They headed for the creek in their territory and when they reached it, they stopped.
Cloudswirl looked at her, seemingly surprised she was actually going to swim but before he could protest she hurled herself in.
Cloudswirl didn't look happy, but soon jumped in as well.
Shadowpaw flicked her long black tail over his head and he yowled. "Hey, I was trying to keep my head dry!"

Shadowpaw looked at him with a teasing blue gaze and dunked him under water. Bubbles rose from his muzzle and as he broke the surface, he called out again. "Seriously, I am *never* coming swimming with you *again*."

Shadowpaw purred. "Well, that's kind of too bad because you don't really have any choice."

Cloudswirl yowled indignantly. "What? Yes I *do,* I'm a warrior and you're an apprentice! And last time *I* checked warriors are above the rank of apprentices!" He puffed out his chest.

"Too bad that your not on land- in water, puffing your chest out makes you look even more like a drowned rat."
Before he could answer she jumped out of the water and began racing for camp.

"Ha ha, can't catch me!" She yowled.

Cloudswirl shook his head madly before giving chase.

But when they arrived at camp, the mood was torn into grief and sadness.
Shadowpaw smelled the air to smell death. She closed her eyes shaking her head. *No, no, no it can't be her!*
But when she gazed up again she saw a patrol made up of Weaselgrowl, Brightpelt and Emberpaw- and with them was the dead body of Sandslip.

Chapter 13

Emberpaw watched as Shadowpaw ran grief-stricken towards the dead body of Sandslip. Her eyes were shadowed with sadness as she looked up at Emberpaw and growled. "How did this happen."
Emberpaw drew her lips up in a huge snarl. "ShadeClan warriors. We don't know who, but there's scent all over her body."

Shadowpaw's eyes widened in shock. "Really? But why? She was a good warrior!"

Emberpaw shrugged. "To us maybe, but not to them."
Suddenly Riverpaw pushed her way out of the medicine den and started to mew. "I heard you mewing so I-" she stopped talking and raced forward as she saw the body of Sandslip.
"No, no, no, no, no!" She yowled.
Ember paw watched as Shadowpaw leaned forward to nuzzle her grieving sister. "ShadeClan did this," She snarled. "but they're not going to get away with it."

Riverpaw opened her eyes wide. "ShadeClan? That's a shame. From the nursery tales they always seemed like such a nice Clan . . ."
Emberpaw broke in. "Well maybe they *are* a nice Clan, but one warrior is doing bad things like this . . . It would make sense. There's always bad cats in a Clan, or I'm a mouse."

Riverpaw licked her sisters ear. "It's ok. Well avenge her."
Suddenly, a ear-splitting screech shattered the air and someone screeched. "Chickfluff's kits are coming!"
Riverpaw flicked her ear and turned to her friends. "I have to go."
Before trotting away.

Chapter 14

Riverpaw was torn with fried as she ran to the medicine den, soon followed by Blackwave who was carrying a bundle of herbs. "Chervil," she explained before rushing to the queen.
Chickfluff was lying on her side, taking in sharp breaths and gasping. She was staring at Riverpaw with terror in her blue eyes. Riverpaw could smell the fear and pain rolling of the queen in waves. Blackwave turned to Riverpaw and growled. "Fetch me a stick," she ordered. "A nice sturdy one that she can bite down on when the pain comes."
Riverpaw rushed out of the camp and scrabbled around for a stick. She found one beside a birch tree. She grabbed the stick in her jaws and raced back to camp. When she arrived back to the nursery she dropped the stick at Blackwave's paws. "Give it to Chickfluff." Blackwave hissed.
Riverpaw pawed the stick to Chickfluff's muzzle and the small yellow queen immediately took it in her jaws. Riverpaw soon heard the sound of splintering wood and a small bundle slid out onto the ground.

"It's the first kit," Blackwave explained. "A little tom. Lick it the wrong way to dry it and warm it up."
Riverpaw nodded and started to lick the kit. It was a dark brown. Suddenly, Weaselgrowl burst into the den. "I was on patrol, but then I heard and, oh is that my first kit?"
Weaselgrowl rushed forwards and looked at his kit. The little kit let out a mewl.

"Well, don't just stand there like a dumb badger, get some soaked-moss for her!" Blackwave snapped.
Weaselgrowl seemed stung by her bluntness but soon ran out of the den to get the water.
Chickfluff howled in pain as another little bundle slid out. This one was smaller and looked more weak.
"It's a she-kit," Riverpaw told Chickfluff fondly.
The yellow queen's eyes were clouded with pain as she nodded.

"Is there more?" Chickfluff gasped. It seemed like every word was harder and harder for her to say.
Blackwave nodded. "Two more."

Chickfluff groaned as another kit came. Riverpaw licked the little she-kit and immediately it started to mewl. She nuzzled Chickfluff's ear and whispered. "This ones strong,"
Chickfluff gave no reply as another ear-splitting screech was heard.
"That's the last one," Blackwave purred. "You did a good job."

Just then, Weaselgrowl came bursting into the den with a massive bundle of dripping moss. Chickfluff purred as he set it down at her head. "Thank you, my love." She purred.
Quick-thinking, Riverpaw ran to the medicine den and grabbed a few borage leaves before passing back to the nursery.
"It's borage," she explained to the yellow queen. "It will help the milk come."
Riverpaw looked at the four kits. Three of them; the dark brown tom and the small tortoiseshell she-kit and the yellow she-kit were nursing, but the other one was lying stiffly on its side.
Chickfluff was staring at her with panic in her eyes. "What's wrong with her?"

Riverpaw leaned forward and prodded the little kit, then pressed her eat against its side.
Oh no, not you too.
Chickfluff was starting to panic. "What's wrong with her?" She repeated.

Riverpaw raised her head and looked into Chickfluff's blue eyes. "I . . . I'm sorry. But . . . She's, shes, dead."
Chickfluff raised her head in a howl but Weaselgrowl quickly ran to her side and mewed. "No, you need to take care of the others."
Then Chickfluff raised her head and looked at Riverpaw. "I'm sorry for you too. You lost your mother today."

Riverpaw dipped her head as she padded out of the den, a new grief tearing at her heart.
We lost two cats today. One was my mother. Another was too young to walk. What is happening to us?

Chapter 15

Ashpaw arrived in the camp carrying two mice and a pigeon, Windstorm beside him. The cats in the camp seemed sad and grief-ridden. Then he heard little mewls from the nursery.
Chickfluff must've had her kits while I was out of camp. But why is everyone so sad? What happened?

Then Pebblestar leaped onto the High Cliff and started to yowl the words for the cats to gather. Her voice sounded weary and tired. "Let all cats old enough to catch their own prey gather here beneath the High Peak for a Clan meeting."

As cats began to gather, Ashpaw realized there was a body in the clearing. As he looked closer he recognized the body of Sandslip.
No, no, no, no! She was like family to me!

Soon all the cats were gathered and Pebblestar began to drone on tiredly.
"We have lost two members of our Clan today,"
Two? Who's the other one?
"Sandslip, mother of Shadowpaw and Riverpaw, was murdered by an ShadeClan cat. There was scent all over her body. Don't worry. She will be avenged. But right now, we just need to be careful. No cat must go to the ShadeClan border alone and any cat who does will be punished. I do not want any more cats to be hurt." Pebblestar gazed around as cats jumped to their paws.

"We need to avenge her right now!" Lynxclaw hissed.

"Yes I agree! We can't let them get away with murdering our cats!" Wildflame agreed.

Pebblestar jumped to her paws and lashed her tail as more and more cats joined in. "Stop!" She yowled. "I know that we must avenge Sandslip, but first we must find more evidence. We don't know if Pondstar is behind this."

Cats murmured in agreement. "I guess," Yellowear snorted. "Pondstar is soft. She wouldn't murder cats on purpose. But that doesn't change the fact that a ShadeClan cat did it!"

Pebblestar sighed as she began to speak again. "Chickfluff has kitted. She had four kits, but one of them died shortly after being born. The other three seem healthy and strong. Chickfluff and Weaselgrowl have named the three living: Snakekit, Cloverkit and Fluffkit. We wish for them to have a long happy life as warriors and hope that Sandslip and Chickfluff's kit are welcomed by StarClan."

Ashore suddenly awoke to a paw prodding him in the side. He opened his eyes and looked around. "Wha . . ."
Then he spotted the light brown pelt of Windstorm. "Come on!" She hissed.
Ash paw rolled his eyes as he got to his paws. He should have known. Windstorm had been waking him up every night. As he followed the light tabby out of the den, she started talking again. "What do you want to hunt for today?"

Ashpaw shrugged. "I don't care. Maybe we could just go for a walk?"
Windstorm purred contently as if she had been wanting him to say this. "Good," she mewed. "Let's go."
They went through the camp entrance which Lynxclaw was guarding. The light brown she-cat flexed her claws when she saw them and growled. "What are you two doing out here?"

Windstorm was quick to jump to an explanation. "We're going hunting."
Lynxclaw looked at the two young cats, nodding, a wistful look in her eyes.

"Have fun," she whispered.
As Ashpaw and Windstorm headed into the forest she started to seem more and more jumpy. A leaf swirled down in front of them; she jumped.
A twig snapped beside them; she jumped.
"What's wrong?" Ashpaw asked, starting to worry.

Then Windstorm lowered her muzzle to his ear and whispered. "I

had a dream from StarClan last night."

Ashpaw jumped in surprise. *Is Windstorm the she that can't tell anyone? But what must we not tell?*
"What happened?" He asked.

"A StarClan cat called Flashstorm came to me in my dreams . . . He said that I have a hard destiny, and then he said something strange," her voice began to shake. "He . . . He said that he couldn't tell either," then she seemed to panic. "What is it Ashpaw?"

Ashpaw shook his light-grey head. "I don't know, Windstorm. I had a dream like that too. I . . . I think that's *us*."

Windstorm leaned into him and rubbed her muzzle along his jaw. "Well, if that's our destiny, why not? I love you, and I hope you feel the same way." Her blue gaze pierced his.

"I do . . ." Ashpaw murmured. "More then anything else."

Chapter 16

"Jump! No, higher, if you jump like a mouse, your enemy is going to have you trapped beneath their paws in no time!"

Shadowpaw was finally back to training with Pebblestar. The leader was being very harsh today. She gave none of her usual kindness, but instead pushed her harder and harder until her laws felt like they'd fall off. When Shadowpaw had asked why they were training so hard, Pebblestar had said that they were making her shoulder strong again, but Shadowpaw thought there was another reason. As Pebblestar's voice cut the air again, Shadowpaw leaped into the air.

Her paws brushed the branch above her head and she unsheathed her claws, trying to dig her claws in as Pebblestar ran forward. *If I could hang on this branch for a few heartbeats, before she knew what I was doing, I could drop down on her head afterward!*
But as she fell, she landed directly in front of Pebblestar, who started to batter her with sheathed claws. "Again!" She ordered. Shadowpaw sighed. This time as Pebblestar raced across the clearing towards her, she bunched her muscles right and flew up into the air even higher! She dug her claws into the rough bark of the branch and hauled herself upward. Pebblestar kept pelting forward but this time, when she reached the tree, Shadowpaw let go of the tree and landed gracefully on Pebblestar's back.
"Better." Pebblestar grunted.

Better? Seriously? I try as hard as I can and I get the words "better." Wow, Pebblestar really is grumpy today.

It was sunset when Pebblestar finally dismissed her. Shadowpaw raced back to the camp, desperate to tell her friends about her day. But when she arrived, scared howls were filming the sky. *That's the camp! What's wrong in there?* Shadowpaw burst forward with a surge of speed and was soon through the entrance. When she saw what was happening, she froze.

ShadeClan is attacking!

Chapter 17

Emberpaw slashed at a brown toms nose as he attacked her. *I can't believe you think you can get away with this.*
She glared at the tom with hate in her orange eyes. *You killed my best friend's mother!*
Emberpaw unsheathed her claws and sliced a long line from his rump to his shoulder. A long thin line of blood started to trickle from it and he howled in pain. Emberpaw released him so he could run off into the woods.
Emberpaw glanced around, looking for her friends. *Where are they? I need to find them so I can help!*
Soon she spotted Ashpaw struggling with a large black she-cat, but before she could join him, Windstorm was at his side.

They'll be mates one day. She mused. *And I'd be fine with that. Windstorm is an honest she-cat who makes my brother happy. What more could I ask for?*
She glanced around again and soon spotted Shadowpaw struggling against three large cats. As she neared, she recognised one of them as Spikepelt from the gathering. Emberpaw raced forwards and slashed at Spikepelt's face. Then she realised the other tom; Darksoul.
"Stop being unjust!" Emberpaw yowled. "Three against one isn't fair, especially when it's three *warriors* and one *apprentice."*

While the three cats were distracted, Emberpaw leaped onto Darksoul's back and started to drag her claws along his spine. He yowled in pain as she tore a large clump of fur and drew blood.
As Darksoul ran off, Shadowpaw gasped from beside her. "Thanks."
Then they leaped onto Spikepelt and tore at his ears sharply. Spikepelt let out a hiss of anger. "You think that'll beat me? Because it won't." Then the great tom landed a heavy blow on Shadowpaw's head and she fell to the ground.

"What did you do to *my* friend?" Emberpaw growled, menace building up inside her. Then she lashed out and dragged her claws

across his face. He bit her tail and jerked it hard in the wrong direction and she felt a rush of pain as her tail dislocated. As he ran away, she realised there was still one cat left; a white she-cat she didn't recognise bending over Shadowpaw.

"What are you doing!" Emberpaw yowled. The white she-cat turned and bared her fangs. Emberpaw darted forward and hooked the she-cats claws from under her.
But this cat had much more skill then the other two toms. She clawed at Emberpaw's belly and while she was howling in pain, the white cat slipped away through the bush. *Sly thing.*

"Shadowpaw, Shadowpaw, are you ok?" Emberpaw gasped as she ran towards her friend.
Shadowpaw lifted her head groggily and fazed around. "Water . . ." She groaned.
In the heat of the battle, it was almost impossible to get Shadowpaw to the medicine den, but they made it.

"Blackwave! Riverpaw! Come quick, Shadowpaw's hurt!" Emberpaw called.
Soon Emberpaw heard rustling and Blackwave and Riverpaw appeared.
While Riverpaw rushed over to her sister, Blackwave meandered over to Emberpaw.
"Aren't you going to help Shadowpaw?" Emberpaw asked.

Blackwave sniffed. "You're hurt too."

Emberpaw sighed. "Yeah, I guess. It's my tail. Can you please hurry up so I can get back into the battle?"
Blackwave padded forward and grabbed her tail. "This will hurt," she warned. "Be ready."
Ember paw gasped as Blackwave wrenched her tail into place. It started to tingle.

"Can I go fight now?" Emberpaw asked. "I can't stay here, my Clanmates need me!"

Blackwave sighed. "Ok, I guess. But be careful. I don't want you to get hurt even more."

Emberpaw dipped her head to Blackwave as she ran out of the den. As she glanced around the clearing for a cat that needed help, she was suddenly attacked by the large black she-cat that had been attacking Ashpaw earlier. Emberpaw surveyed her enemy; her long black fur was soft, almost too soft. Her eyes were an icy blue that Emberpaw could feel burning into her pelt. Then the black she-cat put her paw over Emberpaw's mouth and put her muzzle to her ear. "You're coming with me." The cat growled.
When the cat released her grip, Emberpaw tried to yowl for help, but the cat swung her nimble paw down on her throat. Emberpaw gurgled.

"I will *kill* you if you don't come with me, along with all your friends." The she-cat hissed.
Finally, Emberpaw saw no choice but to be dragged out of camp by the cat into the forest.

Chapter 18

The yowling of cats outside scared Riverpaw. She had no battle training at all, and she had no clue what she would do if a cat attacked her.
Surely they wouldn't attack a Medicine Cat? Riverpaw wondered. *They wouldn't . . . But then again, one of them did murder my mother, which just shows they would hurt me . . .*

Blackwave seemed to read her mind, because suddenly, Riverpaw felt a comforting tail-tip on her shoulder.
"I know your worried," Blackwave spoke. "but if those cats have any heart in them, they won't hurt a Medicine Cat."

Riverpaw looked at the Medicine Cat gratefully. Riverpaw padded over to the entrance of the den. Loud caterwauling was heard outside as cats fought. Riverpaw glanced around looking for her sister and friends. Soon she spotted the black and light-grey pelts of Shadowpaw and Ashpaw. She looked to the nursery, where Chickfluff was viciously guarding her kits against a small tortoiseshell cat.
But where's Emberpaw?

As she searched harder for the dark-grey she-cat, she had no luck. But she could see Emberpaw's mother; Wildflame. The orange she-cat was swiping at a large white tom's face. He yowled as she clawed his ear and quickly fled.

Riverpaw started to panic as she couldn't see Emberpaw anywhere.
Where could she be?
Then, Blackwave called out. "Come quick, Pebblestar's hurt!"
Immediately forgetting her panicked attempts of finding Emberpaw, Riverpaw ran to her mentor and panted. "What happened?"

"I don't know," Blackwave mewed frantically. "She was fighting Hawkclaw!"
Suddenly, a brown tabby pushed its way into the den and sneered. "Hawk*claw?* Take a moment and think, will you? Have you seen

Pondstar here today? No, because she isn't our leader anymore. Hawkstar is."

Riverpaw was surprised that an enemy warrior had pushed its way into the medicine den, and even more so that Pondstar was dead. "How did she die?" Riverpaw asked.
Beside her, Blackwave was digging violently into the ground, as if she wanted to attack the brown tabby.
As soon as she asked, the tabby became defensive. "None of your business!" He spat, as he stalked out of the den to join the fighting once more.
Riverpaw rushed to Pebblestar, who was lying on her side in the clearing. She coughed, evil blood spitting out of her mouth.

Hawkstar jumped onto the High Peak and began to speak, all the cats stopped fighting to listen to him. "This is only the beginning of my reign. Be prepared to fight for your lives." The massive brown tom spat with pure hate. Cats glanced around in terror, including some of the ShadeClan cats. *Good. At least not all of them agree with his bloodthirsty power.* Pebblestar writhed on the ground and opened her jaws feebly, seemingly like she was trying to speak.
Then Hawkstar leaped off of the High Peak and made his way to the camp entrance. He signalled for his cats to follow, and then stalked out of the entrance.
Pebblestar started to cough violently. As blood flooded out of her mouth, Riverpaw frantically called for Blackwave. "Blackwave, hurry! She's bleeding!"

But before her mentor arrived, Pebblestar started to twitch and then lie still. Blackwave was soon there, touching Pebblestar's body.
"Is she dead?" Riverpaw asked nervously.

"She still had three lives left," Blackwave reassured Riverpaw. "It will be a few moments before she wakes. Right now, we need to treat the others."
Riverpaw followed her mentor back to the medicine den where cats had begun to line up.

"Who has the worst injuries?" Blackwave called into the crowd. She seemed completely confident in herself. *Well of course, she's done this before, after all.*

"Stormpelt tore a few claws," Yellowear nudged his brother.

"And Brightpelt has a belly wound," Weaselgrowl added. "Not too bad, but bad enough."

"Nothing worse?" Blackwave asked.

"I don't think," Redfoot replied.
As the two cats that were the worst injured came forward, Blackwave growled. "It's lucky there was nothing worse."

While Blackwave tended to Brightpelt's injury, Riverpaw tended to Stormpelt's. The grey warrior limped over, one of his front paws stained with blood.
"I'm guessing you haven't cleaned it yet?" Riverpaw mewed.

Stormpelt nodded. "There hasn't been any time."
Riverpaw nudged him. "Well, you can do it now. I can't help you when there's all that blood in the way!"
As the grey warrior washed his bloody paw, Riverpaw glanced around at the other warriors. Ashpaw had a torn ear and Shadowpaw had scratches all along her side.
But where's Emberpaw?

Soon Stormpelt's grunted. "I'm done."
Riverpaw turned back to him and sniffed the wound. It smelled like crow-food.

"You have an infection," She announced. "You'll need some oak leaf for that."
She padded away to the herb store and quickly grabbed some of the large leaf. She also pawed out a few scraps of comfrey to soothe the pain.
When she arrived back to the grey tom, she began to explain what she was about to do.
"I need to chew these up and mix it to make a poultice. Then I'll put it on your paw. It should stop the infection and soothe the pain."

Stormpelt nodded. "Thanks, Riverpaw."

Riverpaw couldn't suppress a purr. "I'm your Medicine Cat: I'm here

to help!"

"And I'm glad you are! You'll be a great Medicine Cat."
As Stormpelt left, Ashpaw came forward, Windstorm, Shadowpaw and Cloudswirl trailing after him.

"Hi." Riverpaw blinked. She had just realised how many cats she had to treat.
"Hi." Shadowpaw mimicked playfully.
Riverpaw flicked her tail over her sisters head.
"I have some scratches." Shadowpaw explained.

Riverpaw sighed. "Ok, I'll be right back with some dock."

Chapter 19

It had been a long day for Ashpaw. He stretched his jaws in a wide yawn as he curled up in his nest, ready to sleep. Pebblestar had woken up from death, which Ashpaw found kind of weird. As soon as she had woke up, she was perfectly fine; only a few non-life-threatening scratches.
So what had killed her?

But no matter, Ashpaw was tired. He closed his eyes, ready to sleep. Soon he floated into a deep sleep. In his dream there was flies buzzing above his head calling. "Ashpaw, Ashpaw!" The flies buzzed.
Ashpaw tried to cover his ears with his paws but the voices didn't stop. "Ashpaw, Ashpaw!"

Then Ashpaw opened his eyes to see Windstorm standing over him. "Ashpaw, I've found something!" She gasped.

"Did you really have to do that?" Ashpaw frowned. "I'm really tired, that battle wasn't easy you know."

"Of course," Windstorm mewed. "If you don't want to come listen to these really important words, it's perfectly understandable."

"No, I'm coming," Ashpaw growled. He heaved himself out of his nest and started to follow Windstorm out of the camp. Weaselgrowl was guarding the camp entrance. When he saw them, he mewed. "Where are you going?"

"Hunting," Windstorm explained.
A knowing look flooded Weaselgrowl's eyes.

When they reached the stream, Windstorm stopped.
"So what do you have to tell me?" Ashpaw asked.

Windstorm purred, rubbing her head against his. "I . . . I'm expecting kits!" She blurted out.

"What?" Ashpaw mewed, completely surprised. "But I'm an apprentice!"

Windstorm purred. "Yes, but surely you'll be a warrior soon? Aren't you happy?"

"O-of course! I'm just surprised!"

"Well I would expect that. It's not many days a cat finds out they're going to be a father!"
Ashpaw gazed deep into Windstorm's blue eyes, love brimming in his heart.
"I guess that makes it official," Ashpaw purred.

"Makes what official?" Windstorm asked.

"That were *mates*."

Windstorm flicked her tail against his ear. "Hadn't you guessed?"

Chapter 20

Shadowpaw stretched. She was worried. Emberpaw was gone. She left her nest, glancing at Ashpaw, who was sleeping soundly, purring softly.
Shadowpaw left the camp and suddenly scented Emberpaw's scent.
"Emberpaw?" She called softly.
Weaselgrowl, who had been on watch, must have went to report to Pebblestar.
Shadowpaw followed the scent of Emberpaw. The ground was disturbed in many places where her scent was.
The clever cat! She left a trail for us!

The trail was quite obvious, so soon Shadowpaw found where it led; right into ShadeClan territory.
Oh no! ShadeClan is full of murderers!
Shadowpaw ran back to the camp and jumped up to Pebblestar's den on the High Peak.

"Pebblestar!" She gasped.

"Yes, Shadowpaw. I'm sorry, we can't do training today."Pebblestar mewed.

"It's not that! I found where Emberpaw is!"

"Where!" Pebblestar was immediately on her paws.

"ShadeClan! They took her when everyone was distracted by the battle!"
But why they would take an innocent apprentice, I don't know.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes! She left a trail. She must've been carried by someone, so she purposely dragged herself on the ground to leave her scent, *and* a trail of disturbed earth!" Shadowpaw insisted.

"That clever cat." Pebblestar mewed.

That's what I thought! Riverpaw mused. *Pebblestar and I think alike!*
*"*So, are we going to go find her or not?"

"Oh, of course!" Pebblestar exclaimed.
Suddenly, she leaped onto the High Peak and began to speak. "Let all cats old enough to catch there own prey gather here beneath the High Peak for a Clan meeting!" *But I'm still here,* Shadowpaw thought. *That's weird. Usually the Clan leader doesn't talk while a Clanmates is still on the High Peak- especially not an* apprentice *for that matter.*
As wounded cats pooled from the dens, Pebblestar spoke again. "We believe we have found Emberpaw,"

"Where?" Wildflame gasped. Shadowpaw remembered Wildflame was Emberpaw's mother.

"ShadeClan." Pebblestar announced, her lip curling upward.

"We must get her back immediately!" Yellowear yowled. His brother, Stormpelt was nodding in agreement. The two toms seemed set on their decision.

"Settle down!" Pebblestar called. "For the patrol to get Emberpaw back, I will take Brownwhisker, Bluewhisker and Nighthowl," Pebblestar spoke the names of the cats who were the least hurt. "Remember, we are not going to fight, but to get out apprentice back. We don't need more bloodshed."
Wildflame opened her mouth as though to protest, then quickly shut it again. *She probably wanted to help get her daughter back.*

*"*I will also take Shadowpaw and Ashpaw," Pebblestar added. "If they can get her back successfully, we may have three new warriors by tonight."
Shadowpaw glanced at Ashpaw. Excitement shone in his yellow eyes.

"Great!" He purred. "We'll be warriors soon!" But then his gaze darkened to a troubled gaze.
Shadowpaw was excited as well, but she carefully contained herself,

as she didn't want to have to stay behind for being crazy. Pebblestar bounded off the High Peak, followed soon after by Shadowpaw. The cats who had been chosen gathered around Pebblestar with fierce glints in their eyes. Bluewhisker was clawing the ground with her claws; soon large lumps of brown earth and plants were piled by her paws.
Brownwhisker was glancing at the she-cat, amusement in his gaze. Then Shadowpaw remembered that Bluewhisker was his sister, as well as Blackwhisker was his brother. *There's a lot of 'whiskers' in that family.* Shadowpaw thought in amusement.
Nighthowl was waiting patiently for Pebblestar's orders. Her black wars were perked and her blue eyes swam with the joy of being able to go and save Emberpaw. *She'd make a good leader. She's calm and thinks before she does anything, yet she's more sly then a fox and will always instruct her patrols well.*
Ashpaw stared expectantly at Pebblestar, his gaze looking troubled.

Pebblestar swept them along with her tail. Soon they were trotting behind her on there way to the ShadeClan border. Pebblestar turned and looked at Shadowpaw. "Lead the way." She ordered.
Shadowpaw expected some objection from one of the warriors, but all three cats padded along in silence, along with Pebblestar and Ashpaw.
When they reached the trail of scuffed earth and long trails in the dust, Shadowpaw paused. She parted her jaws to taste the air. "It's this way." She mewed, whisking to the farthest point of the trail. It went along like this for a while, but then, suddenly she lost the trail. A thin circle of blood surrounded the place they stood.
Ashpaw padded up beside him and gasped. "Is this . . . Is this Emberpaw's blood?"

Shadowpaw shook her head. "It can't be. Smell it. It smells like a prey-animal. Besides-" she lowered her muzzle and licked the circle. "It tastes like squirrel blood."

Ashpaw gave a puff of relief while Bluewhisker mewed from behind her. "Good observation, Shadowpaw."

"Yes, I agree." Pebblestar purred.

"What do we do now?" Ashpaw asked anxiously.

"We could scout the whole area and look for more signs of her." Brownwhisker suggested.

"No, I don't think so. We know Emberpaw is probably in the ShadeClan camp, so why don't we just go there?" Nighthowl growled.

"That would be a bad idea," Bluewhisker disagreed. "Hawkstar seems evil. He'd probably do something horrible to us."

Pebblestar raised her tail for silence. "Quiet!" She ordered. "All those ideas are good, but I agree with Bluewhisker. We don't know what Hawkstar would do to us."

Shadowpaw could almost feel Ashpaw's rage when he opened his mouth and yowled. "WE DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY'VE DONE TO EMBERPAW EITHER! SHE MIGHT NEED US!"

All five cats stared in astonishment.
"You know what?" Ashpaw growled. "I don't want to come anymore. If you won't come, I'll go by *myself."* Then he stormed off through the bush.
A moment passed before Pebblestar sighed. "I guess we have no choice but to follow him.
Shadowpaw almost felt grateful for Ashpaw storming out like that, because now they *had* to go. As they stalked across ShadeClan's border, they saw the oak trees start to change to pines.
"Woah . . ." Shadowpaw almost yowled in awe.

"Shut up, flea-brain," Brownwhisker hissed. "Or do you *want* ShadeClan to know we're here?"
Shadowpaw slapped her tail over her mouth. She couldn't believe she had done that! What an embarrassing thing to do.
When they reached the camp, Hawkstar was standing on a low broad branch of a huge pine tree. Needles rustled as Hawkstar began to speak.

"As most of you know, Shadowfang has captured a new apprentice from each Clan in all of our battles." He yowled.

"*All* of the Clans?" Nighthowl whispered. "He's already been into

battle with all the Clans, and taken an apprentice from each?"

The massive brown tom began to speak again. "Emberpaw of EchoClan." He nodded at Emberpaw, who Shadowpaw realised was sitting at the roots of the trunk, huddled between two other apprentices.
"Gempaw from IvyClan," this time he nodded to a white she-cat who huddled closely next to Emberpaw, green eyes wide and scared. "And lastly, Waterpaw of StormClan." He jabbed his tail at the last cat; a blue-grey tom with yellow eyes.

No cats objected at this. *They must be really scared.* Shadowpaw thought. *There must be at least a few cats who disagree with this . . . ?*

"We will be training them *our* ways for a few moons, and then I will send them back to their Clans; as spies for us."

"*What?"* Briwnwhisker gasped. At this, Pebblestar leaped out of the bush and growled. "Give us our apprentice back!"

Hawkstar stared in shock. "Have you been *spying* on us?"

Pebblestar lifted her chin defiantly. "So what if we have? You stole apprentices from every Clan, and we want ours back!"

Hawkstar narrowed his eyes. "Fine take your apprentices. We still have Gemoaw and Waterpaw!"

Then Brownwhisker leaped out of the bush. "No you don't! Because we're taking them too! We'll deliver them back to their Clan safely!"

Hawkstar growled. "Ok, then. Well just have to take *more*."

The three apprentices ran over to where Shadowpaw and the patrol were.
"Was it you who found the trail?" Emberpaw asked.

"Yes!" Shadowpaw purred. "I was looking for you and I found it . . . Why did Hawkstar also take Gempaw and Waterpaw?"

"He wanted them for his stupid plan of taking over the other Clans," Emberpaw paused to roll her eyes. "Like it would work. The

apprentices would probably tell the Clan all ShadeClan's battle moves anyway. Hawkstar is stupid . . . He was also going to give us names like 'Emberblood, Waterdrown and Gemcut'."

"That's terrible!" Shadowpaw gasped.
"It's ok though, because we found you. You'll be safe now."

"I know." Emberpaw purred. "I'll always be safe."

Chapter 21

Emberpaw had no idea why Hawkstar had thought he would get away with taking her and the other two apprentices. The patrol plodded along in utter silence- the two apprentices from the other Clans were glancing at each other nervously. Then Nighthowl reached out with her tail and touched Gempaw on the shoulder. "It's ok," the black warrior reassured. "We won't keep you captive." Ashpaw looked at Emberpaw and shrugged, as though he was confused by Nighthowl's niceness.

The white apprentice looked wide-eyes at Waterpaw and shivered. The blue-grey tom returned her nervousness as sniffed the air, as if he was worried a badger or fox would jump out of every bush. Shadowpaw flicked her ears in his direction.
Brownwhisker turned to the apprentices, and mewed. "Look, were helping you, but if you don't want it, you can always go back to ShadeClan and Hawkstar!" Then he lashed his tail irritably.

Emberpaw pushed her way past Bluewhisker and Nighthowl so she could stand by the apprentices. They walked in silence until they returned to the camp. As the thorn barrier rustled, she could hear her mother yowling. "Have you brought my kit back?"

Pebblestar returned her call, her voice hoarse as if she hadn't got any sleep.
"Yes, she's here."
As they pushed their way into the camp, Wildflame came rushing over speedily and immediately began sniffing her kit everywhere. "Are you ok? What did they do to you?" Then Wildflame noticed the other apprentices. "What are *they* doing here?"

Pebblestar dipped her head. "They were also being held captive by Hawkstar. We couldn't leave them there, could we?"

Wildflame shrugged her fiery orange shoulders. "I guess. But what will you do with them?"

"They can rest here today. I will send two patrols to take them home tomorrow."

"Well then, we'll need beds for them! I wonder if Chickfluff's kit's would like to help?"

Suddenly, Birchsky came out of the warriors den, stretching. "What's happening?" He yawned.

Pebblestar beckoned for the tom to follow her into the den as she padded away. *Good. Pebblestar can explain to him.*

Then, three small bundles of fur came tumbling out of the nursery. The dark brown tom say at Emberpaw's feet and mewed. "I'm the strongest warrior in the Clan."

"No you are not, Snakekit!" The yellow she-kit yowled. "I am."

Lastly, the little tortoiseshell named Cloverkit came tumbling at her heels. "Hello." She gazed up into Emberpaw's eyes. The little tortoiseshell's face was soft and fuzzy around the edges. Her eyes were unblinking and blue.
I hope I get to mentor her. I should be a warrior by then, shouldn't I?

By now, the little yellow one, Fluffkit, was attacking her tail. "Hey!" Emberpaw hissed as she leaped into the air.
Fluffkit *mrrowed* in amusement before running away into the den, soon followed out again by an angry Chickfluff. "Go say sorry to Emberpaw *right now!*" The yellow queen ordered.

"Ok," Fluffkit whimpered before trotting over to Emberpaw. "Sorry," Fluffkit puffed, looking at her paws.

"It's ok," Emberpaw sighed. "Just don't do it next time."

Chapter 22

It was sunrise and Riverpaw blinked her eyes open. The two apprentices; Gempaw and Waterpaw would be going home today. Brownwhisker stood in the clearing, a huge cluster of cats gathered around him. "For the border patrol along ShadeClan's border, I think that I will get Cloudswirl to lead." He turned to the young warrior. "You can take Birchsky, Brightpelt and Stormpelt."

The young brown warrior nodded and bounded off to get the other three cats.
Then Pebblestar leaped out of her den and started mewing. "Let all cats old enough to catch their own prey gather here beneath the High Peak for a Clan meeting!"
Cloudswirl sighed and his tail dropped as he padded over to the clearing. *Hopefully he still gets to go on his patrol.* Riverpaw thought.

Then, Pebblestar spoke again. "We must have two patrols to take the apprentices back. Brownwhisker, who do you think should take them?"

Brownwhisker quickly replied. "To go to IvyClan, Nighthowl, Stormpelt and Wildflame. Make sure Vinestar knows the truth- what actually happened."
The three cats dipped their heads and padded away, Gempaw following quickly behind.
Then, Brownwhisker raised his tail for silence. "the cats to take Waterpaw home will be Bluewhisker, Yellowear and Greenstem."

It was later that day, and all the patrols had arrived back to camp after a long day of hunting and border patrols.
Pebblestar leaped onto the High Peak and began to yowl the traditional words to call the cats together.
When all the cats were there, she spoke again. "Shadowpaw, Emberpaw and Ashpaw fought well in the battle against ShadeClan. I have been meaning to do this since the battle, but there hasn't been time. Shadowpaw, Emberpaw, Ashpaw, come forward."
The three cats opened their eyes wide as they realised what was

happening. Riverpaw let out a happy pure for her sister that was so loud, she thought that all the Clans would hear her.
"Are they ready?" Pebblestar asked, glancing at Greenstem and Weaselgrowl.

Weaselgrowl shook his large brown head. "Emberpaw has worked very hard and I think she's ready."

"And I say the same for Ashpaw," Greenstem mewed.

"And I, Shadowpaw," Pebblestar finished.

Pebblestar turned to the three young cats. "Do you promise to uphold the warrior code, even at the cost of your life?"
Emberpaw nodded. "I do." Ashpaw and Shadowpaw echoed her quickly.
Pebblestar looked Emberpaw in the eye. "Then by the powers of StarClan, you shall receive your warrior names. Emberpaw, from this moment on, you will be known as Emberglow. StarClan honours your quick-thinking and readiness in battle and I know you will be a wonderful warrior."
Pebblestar touched her muzzle to Emberglow's head, and Emberglow licked her shoulder. Then Pebblestar continued. "Ashpaw, from this moment on you will be known as Ashfall. StarClan honours your lovingness towards others," she eyed Windstorm. "and nimble-paws."
After he had kicked her shoulder, Pebblestar went to Shadowpaw. "Shadowpaw, from this moment on you will be known as Shadowleap. StarClan honours your open-mind and readiness to accept hard things in life."

Riverpaw snorted. *Ha, when she was hurt, she complained about . . . All the time.* But Riverpaw still began to cheer louder then anyone else. "Emberglow! Ashfall! Shadowleap!" As the Clan welcomed the new warriors.

Chapter 23

Ashfall padded over to Windstorm and muzzled her. "Now we can be proper mates." He purred.

"Good," Windstorm mewed. "Our kits will have a father to be proud of, you know. Your such a brave, loving cat."
Then Ashfall flicked his ears as he spotted Emberglow and Shadowleap padding over. Emberglow was eyeing them with confusion in her eyes. "I better explain." Ashfall mewed in his mates' ear.

"Emberglow, Shadowleap, there's something I have to tell you," he admitted.

"What?" Emberglow asked.

"Windstorm is expecting *my* kits." He puffed his chest out proudly.

"Your kits?" Shadowleap explained. "But we were *just* made warriors! How long has this been going on?" She eyes Ashfall and Windstorm with cold eyes.

Ashfall shrugged. "A few days ago?" He glanced at Windstorm.

She looked back with loving eyes. "Yes. I suppose now that you're a warrior you're going to want me to go straight to the nursery?"

Ashfall purred. "Well of course! I don't want our kits, or you, to be hurt before they're even born!"
Ashfall nudged his mate before mewing again. "Come on. I need to talk to Blackwave and Riverpaw."

When they reached the medicine den, Ashfall paused, gesturing for Windstorm to go first. She looked at him, a playful glint in her blue eyes.

"Hello Blackwave, Riverpaw." Ashfall dipped his head.
His friend returned the gesture. "What do you need, Ash*fall*." She

said his warrior name.

"Windstorm is expecting my kits." Ashfall raised his chin proudly. Riverpaw flicked her tail in surprise. "Really? You just became a warrior!"

Ashfall stiffened, his light-grey pelt beginning to stiffen. "Is there anything wrong with that?" He growled.

Riverpaw shook her head. "No, no not at all! Kits are good for the Clan! It just surprised me!"

Ashfall leaned closer. "Well that's good."
Windstorm was twitching her whiskers beside him. Her pelt was spiked up, as though she was offended. Ashfall touched his tail to her shoulder. "It's ok," he whispered. "Riverpaw isn't a warrior. She wouldn't know what love for another cat is."

Riverpaw had obviously heard, because she hissed. "I love the whole Clan! Including you two!" She paused to shake her head. "I'm going to be the Medicine Cat on my own one day. Can you let me speak my mind?"

Ashfall shrugged. "I guess I was a bit harsh."

Riverpaw snorted. "A bit. Ha. So, what did you need me to do with Windstorm?"

Ashfall placed his tail protectively around Windstorm's shoulders. "I want you to check her over and tell her to go to the nursery."
Riverpaw flicked her ears, then turned to Windstorm. The light tabby was sitting quietly beside Ashfall, a dumbfounded expression on her face.
"Do you want to go to the nursery?" Riverpaw asked.

Windstorm shook her head wildly, eyes suddenly bright. "Of course not! I want to carry out my warrior duties as long as possible!"

Riverpaw frowned. "I think you should be ok to do her warrior duties . . . Let me go fetch Blackwave. She's treating Smallstep's pads. They're sore because he went on a long walk yesterday- he's not used to that. He usually stays in camp."

So that's why Blackwave isn't here.
The sky was turning dark as Ashfall and Windstorm padded out of the den. Windstorm's fur blew upward softly in the wind.
Cloudswirl rushed to greet them. "Is everything ok?" He asked worriedly. Probably because Windstorm was his sister.

"Yes," Windstorm purred. "I'm expecting Ashfall's kits." She leaned into the light-grey warrior.
Cloudswirl opened his jaws as though to say something, then whisked away, quickly reappearing with Shadowleap.

"Shadowleap is expecting my kits . . ."
He announced.

Ashfall was immediately offended. "You go around telling us not to have kits as young warriors and now you are!"

Shadowleap shrugged her shoulders. "It was an accident."

Ashfall snorted, Windstorm following closely behind. "Come on, let's make you a nest in the nursery."

Windstorm sighed. "Fine."

Ashfall padded out of the camp and started to drag bracken from a bush. As he built up a pile of bracken in the clearing outside the nursery, while Windstorm collected moss. When they had collected enough, Windstorm began weaving the bracken into a nest. Ashfall clumped moss into the openings. Then, Windstorm lay moss down on top to make a comfortable bedding for her and the unborn kits.
Windstorm lay down and purred. "Comfy, she *mrrowed.*

Chapter 24

It had been two moons and Windstorm's belly was swollen to a massive size. Shadowleap groaned as she looked at herself. Her thick black fur was ruffled and her own belly was almost as big as Windstorm's.
Soon, Cloudswirl, Brightpelt and Weaselgrowl pushed their way through the thorn barrier. Each cat carried a piece of prey.
Weaselgrowl and Cloudswirl rushed over.
Cloudswirl came to her, carrying a large fluffy squirrel.
Weaselgrowl went to his mate.
The kits were growing bigger, and were getting closer to be apprentices every day. Snakekit and Fluffkit pounded towards their father in excitement.
Shadowleap purred in amusement.

Fluffkit leaped onto her father and tore at his back with tiny thorn-sharp claws. Snakekit looped around his legs and purred. Cloverkit sat mewling at the nursery entrance. "I didn't want squirrel, I wanted vole!" The little kit demanded, slamming her paws on the ground. Her tortoiseshell pelt was puffed up in disappointment. Then, her mother, Chickfluff came up behind her and wrapped her tail around her kit.

"Your father spent a long time catching prey for you!" She mewed. "You should be grateful!"

Cloverkit blinked at her mother with sky-blue eyes, her whiskers twitching. Then the little kit pounded towards her father after her littermates and jumped on him.
Shadowleap was snapped back into her own world as Cloudswirl rested his tail on her shoulder, dropping his mouse at her paws. "Here." He mewed, nuzzling her. Shadowleap blinked gratefully at him before biting into the mouse. It's body was still warm, and the meat rested peacefully in her stomach.

Then, Ashfall pushed his way out of the Warriors den, then rushed to the nursery to check on Windstorm. As he reached the nursery,

Windstorm let out a groan. "Help . . ." She hissed in pain.

Ashfall's eyes glazed in fear. "I think the kits are coming!" He raced back out of the den, leaving Shadowleap rushing to help. She padded quickly out of the camp to find a stick. Soon, she found a big sturdy one. She picked it up in her jaws and ran back, stumbling with the weight of her kits and the large stick.

When she reached Windstorm, she dropped the stick at her paws. "Bite down on it," she ordered. "It will help with the pain."
Windstorm nodded.
Shadowleap knew this because her sister, Riverpaw had told her.

Soon it was past sun-high. Shadowleap was getting worried. Usually it didn't take this long for queens to have their kits, did it?
Suddenly, a wet bundle slid out onto the nest. "A tom!" Riverpaw squealed triumphantly.
Shadowleap looked at the newborn. He had a dark ginger pelt and a strange white mark on his chest. It looked like a claw-scratch.
Then, a squeal sounded from the medicine den.
Shadowleap was on her paws in an instant, padding to see what was wrong.

When she glanced inside, Blackwave lay on her side, chest heaving. "Riverpaw, quick!" The black queen yowled.
Soon Riverpaw arrived. She immediately started to leap on Blackwave's chest. But Blackwave pushed her off with an immense strength for a breathless half-dead cat.
"Don't . . ." Blackwave wheezed. "It's . . . It's a sign, a sign- a sign that for every kit born a cat will . . . A cat will die . . . Nobody can stop that." Blackwave turned her gaze to Shadowleap. "Nobody but you."

Then the black and silver medicine cat's eyes glazed over.
Riverpaw rushed forward. "No! Blackwave, you still have to give me my name! No Blackwave! No, please no!"
Shadowleap leaned forward and placed her tail-tip in Riverpaw's shoulder. To her surprise, Riverpaw whirled around.
"This is your fault," she snarled.

"What?" Shadowleap was surprised.

"You heard Blackwave. You're the only one who can stop this! Your the reason it's happening! Do something! Save us! I don't want to die . . ." Her sister's voice trailed into a whimper.

Chapter 25

Emberglow had been told by Shadowleap about the horrible sign. Blackwave dying, and the meaning of the poor kit's birth.
Luckily, both Windstorm and Scratchkit were healthy. Her brother was proud of his young kit and played with him everyday. Emberglow was happy for her brother.
Right now she was going to the nursery to see Ashfall and Scratchkit. The young tom was already on his feet, scampering around the camp.
Scratchkit was sitting outside the nursery, his ginger fur ruffled in the wind.
When he saw her, his eyes lit up. He raced towards her, tripping on his own paws. "Emberglow, look what I can do!" Scratchkit ordered. He suddenly halted to a stop and crouched down, his legs tucked underneath him. Then, with blue eyes sparkling, he leaped onto Emberglow.
Emberglow shook him off half heartedly. "I have to speak with your father," Emberglow announced. "I'll play with you later, ok?"

Emberglow searched his eyes. His face looked crestfallen, now, and his whiskers drooped.
Emberglow gave him a comforting lick between the ears. "I'm sorry. But your father is my brother. If you ever have younger littermates, you'll understand."
Scratchkit looked up with a defiant gaze. "I understand *now*." He insisted.

Emberglow sighed. "Whether you understand or not, I need to talk to Ashfall. *Alone."*
Scratchkit frowned, but stepped away from the entrance. "Ashfall's inside." The tom meowed.
"Thanks." Emberglow dipped her head to Scratchkit and padded inside the nursery.
"Ashfall?" She called out. "Come on, I need to speak with you."
Soon, a light-grey pelt poked his head out from a nest. Windstorm was curled beside him, faintly snoring.

"What?" He asked, blinking sleep wearily from his eyes.

"*Outside*." Emberglow hissed.

Ashfall got to his paws and followed Emberglow out of the nursery. "What do you need?" He mumbled.

"The sign. It's bad. Why did Blackwave die? She was young. She didn't need it!"

Ashfall blinked. "Sometimes things just happen. We can't stop it."

"Actually, yes. Shadowleap can! Blackwave said so . . . "

"Well tell her then. I can't help you." Ashfall shrugged before turning back to the nursery. "I have to go. Windstorm needs me."

Emberglow sighed, letting her tail trail on the ground as she padded away.
She didn't know what to do.

Chapter 26

Riverpaw hurried down the slope on her way to the MoonTree. She'd been here before with Blackwave, sharing tongues with her ancestors and interpreting signs. But now Blackwave was gone. What would she do.
Stay calm. You need to be. Everybody needs you to be.
The silence broke as she reached the Gathering place. The other medicine cats were milling around happily, exchanging talk about different herbs and their uses.
Oakpool; the ShadeClan Medicine cat was the first to notice her. Her light violet eyes immediately clouded over.

"Riverpaw, where's Blackwave? Is she all right?" The black she-cat asked.

Riverpaw dipped her head to the older medicine cat. "She . . . She died when Scratchkit was born. It was a sign . . . She told me."

"What was the sign?"

"She said that for every cat to come into this world, a cat will be taken away."

Oakpool gasped. "Oh no! Do you think it applied to all the Clans?"

"I don't know . . . But I think it has do to with Hawkstar."
Riverpaw stopped speaking as the other medicine cats padded over. Reedpelt tilted his head in confusion as Sweetberry opened her mouth to ask a question.

"Blackwave's dead." Riverpaw explained before they could ask. Then, Riverpaw noticed a small cat beside Reedpelt who's eyes stretched wide in terror.
"Don't scare Lightningpaw." Reedpelt ordered. "He's my new apprentice."

As Sweetberry opened her mouth to speak, Riverpaw frowned. "I

don't know what I'll do."

Oakpool touched her tail to Riverpaw's shoulder reassuringly. "I can give you your name, if you like."

Riverpaw dipped her head. "Yes. That way I can serve my Clan better."

All five medicine cats padded along in silence until the reached the MoonTree.
It's wood shine solved in the half-moon. Oakpool lifted her head and yowled to the sky.
"Riverpaw has trained hard in the ways of a medicine cat, and it is time for her to receive her full name." She turned to Riverpaw. "Do you promise to protect your Clanmates from illness and injuries, even at the cost of your life?"

Riverpaw nodded. "I do."
Then by the powers of StarClan, I give you your new name, Riverwave, in honour of Blackwave, who was a brave and trustworthy cat."
As the medicine cats began to chant her new name, Riverwave saw a shimmer of starlight and she turned to it. The shape of Blackwave was emerging. The black and silver she-cat's blue haze scorched her fur. "You've done well, young one, and I know you will take care of your Clan well."
Then Blackwave disappeared, and Riverwave was in total darkness.

"Wake up, wake up!" A voice called from above her.
Riverpaw, no River*wave* lifted her head to see Lightningpaw staring down at her. The small yellow tom tilted his head. "Why are you in my dream? I saw you earlier. You just became a medicine cat, didn't you?"

"Yes," Riverwave meowed.

"I need your help." Lightningpaw admitted reluctantly. "I have a plan to stop Hawkstar."

Riverwave frowned. "How? You're barely out of the nursery. How would you know this stuff?"

Lightningpaw shrugged. "I don't know. It just comes to me. My mom says I get it from her. She's smart too." He puffed out his chest in pride.

"Well," Riverwave prodded. "Tell me the plan."

"Well, Hawkstar only *thinks* he's big and bad. What if we could make him think that was true?" Lightningpaw said.

"How would that help?"

"Well, it would make him *way* overconfident, and that's a good thing. It will trick him into thinking he can win!" Lightningpaw told her.

"But why are you thinking of this stuff? Your a *medicine cat.* Not a *think-of-all-the-battle-strategies-I-can-cat.*"

"If it's useful, why not use it? And to be honest, my brother Thunderpaw is the one who thought of the battle plan. I just thought of making him overconfident."

Riverwave saw that Lightningpaw was starting to fade. "Ok. I'll think about it. I'll talk to Pebblestar about it. Ok? Ok. Bye. Don't mention that we walked in each others dreams!"

Lightningpaw blinked before fading completely, and Riverwave woke up.
This'll be a long day.

Riverwave sorted through a pile of strong smelling herbs when Shadowleap walked in, her belly swinging massively below her. "Hi Riverpaw." She mewed.

Riverwave snorted. "I'm not Riverpaw anymore. I'm Riverwave."

Shadowleap immediately brightened up. "And you didn't tell me! What? *Why!*"

Riverwave shrugged. "You were sleeping."

Shadowleap rolled her icy blue eyes and snorted. "Yah, so."

"You're expecting kits. I didn't want to wake you."

Shadowleap tensed at this. "Um. Speaking about kits, I have to go."

Shadowleap whirled out of the den. Riverwave waited a few moments before following. She plodded a few fox-lengths behind Shadowleap for a while, dodging behind trees when her sister turned back to look.
Then they reached the ShadeClan border. *What is she doing here?* Riverwave thought. *We're at war with ShadeClan right now!*

Shadowleap glanced around one more time before stepping lightly across the border.
The black she-cat sat down. She seemed to be waiting for something. Or *someone.*
Riverwave crouched under a prickly bush and waited for whatever her sister was waiting for.
Then, a large brown tom leaped down from a tree. "Shadowleap!" He called.

So they've met before.
But when the brown tom came closer, Riverwave realized who it actually was.
It was *Hawkstar.*
"Hello, my love." Hawkstar mewed.

"And to you, too." Shadowleap purred.

I can't believe her! Those kits are Hawkstar's, not Cloudswirl's!
Hawkstar twined his tail with hers as he sat down.
"I can't believe none of your Clanmates have found out yet." He growled.

"I can," Shadowleap said dreamily. "I covered all the scent trails like you told me too, and made false ones, *and* I always walk as quietly as possible. I follow all the precautions."

"I'm glad to hear. I wouldn't want anyone to ruin our fun." Hawkstar sai in a throaty growl.
Riverwave seriously couldn't believe what she was hearing. Her own sister was mates with Hawkstar?

Then Hawkstar spoke again. "How are the kits? When are they coming? You know, you have to come to ShadeClan before they're born- it would be *so* much harder to get them here after they're born."

"They're due in the next quarter moon. I'm coming with you today. I can't take it anymore; lying to my Clanmates."

"They're not your Clanmates anymore. But I am." Hawkstar twitched the tip of his tail for her to follow and they went of into the dark pines.

Chapter 27

Ashfall was stalking a mouse. The light-grey fur of the tiny body was being ruffled by the wind and its long, worm-like tail was snagged on a twig.
Ashfall crept forward solemnly, keeping his grey fur out of rsight and making sure not to step on so much as a leaf.
As he neared the mouse, a blackbird let out a raucous call. The mouse started and began racing away. *Stupid mouse.* Ashfall thought. *The stupid blackbird was just singing its song, not alerting you!*
But it didn't matter because soon Ashfall had hooked the mouse in his claws, and neatly bit into its neck.
As the mouse fell limp, Riverpaw burst into view.
"Riverpaw, is everything all right?" Ashfall asked, dropping the mouse's body.

Riverpaw shook her head. "No, it's not. And by the way, I'm Riverwave now."

Ashfall hardly paid attention to Riverwave's new name. "What's wrong?"

"Shadowleap. She's left. With . . . Hawkstar." The silver tabby mewed.

"We have to save her!" Ashfall growled.

"No. We can't. She went willingly."

Ashfall turned to Riverwave and growled. "Yah, whatever. Why would she do that?"

"I don't know . . . "

"Is she seriously gone? I . . . Don't understand. She had everything here."

"Yeah, except Hawkstar." Riverwave said bluntly. "I probably feel

this loss more than you. She's my *sister*."
Ashfall didn't know what to say. Shadowleap had left them. For a heartless, evil, leader who wanted to destroy EchoClan. And for what? Fun? Ashfall couldn't believe shed chosen Hawkstar over Cloudswirl.
Who would I choose? A sweet, loving, pretty she-cat, or one that was a leader who wanted to destroy all the Clans. Hmm . . . That's a hard one. Wait, who am I kidding. I'D CHOOSE THE NICE PRETTY ONE THAY DIDN'T WANT TO DESTROY THE WORLD!
He almost yowled his thoughts out loud, but slapped his tail over his mouth just in time. "Let's tell Pebblestar." He said just in time.

"Yes. Let's." The silver tabby whisked away, her tail high in the air. Ashfall followed after quickly grabbing his mouse.
"I seriously can't believe this." He frowned, his voice muffled by the grey fur of mouse.

Riverwave grunted. "You've only mentioned it ten times."

When they reached the camp, Ashfall poked inside. Brightpelt sat grooming Yellowear. Ashfall's thoughts immediately flashed to kits. *Wait, no. Don't. Remember Blackwave's warning. We don't want kits right now.*
But Ashfall couldn't suppress a purr as he thought of his beloved son, Scratchkit. The little tom was growing fast, and soon he'd be a warrior that EchClan could be proud of.

Then he saw Pebblestar. The silver and brown she-cat was stretching near her den. Her blue eyes were closed and she trembled as she yawned.
Ashfall and Riverwave walked over to her.
"What?" Pebblestar blinked sleepily.

"We have news." Riverwave announced.

"What?" Pebblestar asked, now alert.

"Shadowleap . . . She's left with Hawkstar." Riverwave growled.

Pebblestar started upward. "We need to send a rescue patrol! You can go of course, Ashfall and Brightpelt, Emberglow and

Greenstem!" She headed for the cliff where she made announcements.

"No!" Ashfall called. "She left willingly! She . . . We think she's mates with Hawkstar."

"Think? We *know*, Ashfall!" Riverwave spoke, lashing her tail.

Pebblestar's eyes dulled. "What? She left willingly? She *wanted* to go with that . . . that monster?"

"Yes." Ashfall mewed. "But we *do* have to get her back somehow. Even if it's by force."

Chapter 28

Shadowleap wasn't a traitor. Coming with Hawkstar wasn't being a traitor. In fact, she had known Riverwave was there, and that's why she said yes. Hawkstar *was* her mate, but that didn't mean she couldn't spy on his Clan.
Shadowleap picked her way carefully through the thin saplings that dotted the rugged slope.
Greenery sprouted at the base of the trees, sucking at the sun greedily.

Hawkstar paused and the fur on his back stood rigid. "EchoClan patrol." He warned.
But I thought that I *am EchoClan.*
Soon three cats appeared trailing each other.
Shadowleap spotted Yellowear and Stormpelt, sniffing at the air.
Behind them was Weaselgrowl. The dark brown tom had an angry look in his eyes and as he took each step, he paused, sniffing the air.
"Careful," she alerted Hawkstar. "We don't need to get caught on EchoClan territory."
On my *territory*.

Soon they had reached the ShadeClan camp.
Cats poked their heads out of the dens curiously, then flinched back as they saw Hawkstar. Only one cat remained. "Who's this, Hawkstar?" A voice asked.

"This, Silentwhisper, is my mate, Shadowleap, from EchoClan." He explained.
The cat Hawkstar had called Silentwhisper nodded her head and then reluctantly ducked back into the den.
Hawkstar turned back to her, his brown eyes glittering.
"I'll get you a den in there with Silentwhisper- she's expecting kits too." He flashed an agitated glance at the apparent nursery and raised his voice. "I would hope she's already making one."
Shadowleap shook her black head. "No, no it's fine. I can make my

own nest."

Hawkstar glared at her and snaked his tail towards her.
Shadowleap jumped back, slowed by her huge belly. Then she fell in a gasp of pain.
Hawkstar looked frantically at her. "What's wrong?"

"I think . . . I think the kits are coming."

Oakpool and Lightningpaw were pushing there way into the nursery. "It's ok, bite onto this stick." Lightningpaw ordered.
But Shadowleap knew it was *not* ok. Something was wrong. She could tell by the worried look in Oakpool's eyes.
The orange she-cat was chewing herbs hurriedly. She spat them out, then pawed them into Shadowleap's gaping mouth.
Hawkstar was outside. "Is everything ok in there?" He called.

Oakpool turned her head around and snapped. "Get out of here, you mouse-brain! Go away! Get water for her, I don't care! Just go *away*."
Shadowleap was surprised by ShadeClan's medicine cat. Standing up to Hawkstar must be hard. And it was the reason she was here . . .
Yes, she loved Hawkstar but she should've had the strength to say no.
Hawkstar's mew replied. "Are you sure? Will she be ok?"

"Not if you keep bugging us!" Lightningpaw spoke up and Shadowleap tensed.
As Hawkstar's paw steps faded away Oakpool growled. "You'll be fine. I just need him to go away."

It seemed like only heartbeats later a tiny mewling kit was lying there. It had black fur just like her own. *Just like me . . . Why did I leave? I need to go home . . . But I can't.*

Chapter 29

Emberglow played with the four kits outside the nursery.
Fluffkit leaped at the ball of miss she was holding. "Got it!" She yowled, before tumbling to the ground.
The news of Shadowleap had been surprising- and sad, but there was nothing Emberglow could do.
Shadowleap could make her own choices, and if that choice was to live in an enemy Clan with an evil leader, then she could do that.

Emberglow turned back to the kits. Fluffkit, Snakekit and Cloverkit were turning six moons old soon and she wanted to ask if she could get Fluffkit to train.
Cloverkit bundled after her yellow sibling screeching, "Hey! You ShadeClan invader! Bring back our prey!"
Fluffkit giggled and raced on, the soft green miss bouncing from her mouth.
Then Snakekit joined in. The dark brown tom opened his mouth to make his deepest voice he could, but it sounded more like a dying rabbit then a scary warrior.
Scratchkit gave a sly smile and padded up to Fluffkit. "It's outs now." He announced. "And by the way, we're not ShadeClan. We're EchoClan!"

Cloverkit gasped. "How dare you! We're EchoClan!"
Emberglow huffed. *Kits and their silly games.*
Then Ashfall pushed his way into the nursery, a mouse dangling from his jaws. Probably for Windstorm. But to her surprise, he placed it in front of the kits.
"Here, kits. I know Weaselgrowl usually brings you all prey, but I wanted to today."
The light grey tom placed the mouse down and Fluffkit growled playfully. The yellow kit squeaked happily over and over with her mouth gaped in a smile. Then Chickfluff appeared. "Can you help me wash the kits?" She asked Emberglow. "It's their apprentice ceremony today." She added more quietly.
"Of course." Emberglow grabbed Fluffkit. The little yellow kit

squeaked and protested.
"Hey! I can wash myself!"
"Ok. Fine. I'll wash Snakekit." Emberglow reached to the brown kit who gratefully accepted her licks. "I remember when you kits were little! So small, so weak, and now look at you guys! You're the biggest kits I know!"
It was hard for Emberglow to forget about Shadowleap's betrayal, but helping out in the nursery made it a little better.
Suddenly Pebblestar leapt onto the High Peak. "Let all cats old enough to catch their own prey gather beneath the High Peak for a Clan meeting!"
The kits perked their ears and bounced up and down. Soon cats had gathered around.
Yellowear sat near Brightpelt and Stormpelt. Greenstem trotted happily over to Brownwhisker, who was purring. Nighthowl and Stickscratch, who were littermates, sat at opposite sides of the camp, Nighthowl with Bluewhisker, and Stickscratch with Lynxclaw. Smallstep and Longwhisker emerged from their den, tails twined.
Pebblestar spoke again. "We have three kits, old enough to become apprentices." She paused. "Snakekit, Cloverkit and Fluffkit, please come forward."
Fluffkit scampered forward excitedly, while her brother and sister walked more regally.
"Fluffkit, from this moment on you will be known as Fluffpaw. Your mentor will be Emberglow. Emberglow, you have displayed great courage and I know you will pass on all your knowledge to your Fluffpaw."
That's surprising. Isn't she supposed to tell the mentors before the ceremony? Whatever. I wanted Fluffpaw and I've got her; I should be happy.

"Hello, Fluffpaw," Emberglow purred as the young kit scampered to her. "I promise I'll train you very hard and make you a *great* warrior."

The ceremony continued until both Snakekit and Cloverkit had become apprentices; Snakepaw to Ashfall, and Cloverkit to Stickscratch.
The cats began to cheer.

"Fluffpaw! Snakepaw! Cloverpaw!"
Chickfluff and Weaselgrowl stood at the back of the crowd, steadily purring.

I'll be a good mentor. And I'll train Fluffpaw to be good. Nothing can stop me!

Chapter 30

Riverwave frowned. The stock of catmint was getting dangerously low, and it was desperate to get more- it was almost leaf-bare. She got to her paws and walked over to Pebblestar's den. As she poked her head in, she heard a cough. Pebblestar's blue eyes were streaming and her nose was crusty.

"Pebblestar!" Riverwave exclaimed, rushing to her leader's side. "How long has this been going on?"

Her leader shrugged. "A few days. I've had a slight tickle, but this morning it started to get worse."

"I'll be right back. I need to grab some catmint." Riverwave meowed, leaving the den to go grab some catmint. There was only a few leaves left. Then she trotted back to the den. "This is all we have." Riverwave said uncertainly.

"It's ok," Pebblestar said, hacking.

"Can I go get catmint?"

"Yeah. Please do."

Riverwave left the den and scanned the camp. Her gaze caught on Brownwhisker. "Would you like to come with me to get catmint?" She asked the big brown tom.

"I'm deputy. I should probably stay here." He glanced around.

"No, come. Please, it's very important."

Brownwhisker gave in and quickly followed.
"We're going to the old twoleg nest on the ShadeClan border. That's where catmint grows. Oh, I hope it's still there!"

They padded side by side for a while, Riverwave thinking about what she had heard Pebblestar and Blackwave talking about all

those moons ago. *Should I ask him? Yes.*

"Brownwhisker?" Riverwave asked.

"Yes?"

"Is it okay if I ask a question?"

"Yes."

"Why do you come into the forest so much?"

"Honestly, Riverwave. There's *so* many reasons I come out here. How can I be expected to answer that?"

"Give me five good reasons."

"Patrols. Hunting. Searching for herbs. Investigating. *Hunting with my mate.*"

"Thank you. I know I can trust you. You're a good warrior, right?"

"*Duh."* Brownwhisker said, as if it was obvious.

Riverwave gasped. Inside the twoleg fence the catmint leaves were shrivelled and dry. "Oh no!" She gasped.

Brownwhisker ran up. "What's wro-" he broke off as he saw the catmint. "Oh no! There's no catmint? That's bad. I heard Cloverpaw coughing earlier, too! And then there's Pebblestar . . . Oh no."

Riverwave sighed.
What did we ever do to deserve this?

Chapter 31

Ashfall was covered in grief, lying beside Windstorm, who was licking his ears, trying to comfort him. He still couldn't believe Shadowleap, one of his best friends, had left- left to be with Hawkstar, an evil cat who planned on destroying the Clans. He couldn't even find comfort in his son and mate anymore.

Scratchkit was playing inside the nursery today; it was cold outside, and with no other kits to play with, he would freeze.
"Watch this!" Scratchkit called. He was now five moons old, and would be apprentices soon.

"What is it?" Ashfall asked wearily.

Scratchkit leapt into the air, pawing viciously at the sky. He did a back flip before landing solidly back on his paws.

"That was very good." Windstorm praised from beside Ashfall.

"Yes," Ashfall agreed. He got out of the nest so he could give his son a lick on the head. "It was."

Scratchkit's eyes lit up with pride, and he purred with happiness- he loved being praised by both his parents.

Ashfall turned to Windstorm. "Our son is going to be the best warrior in EchoClan!" He purred.

"I agree." Windstorm said.

Scratchkit had went back to playing, swinging his paws at fake prey or enemy warriors- hissing fake threats while he was at it.
"I'll get you, you stupid bird!" He growled as he swiped at the air. Of course, there was no actual bird.

"I better go." Ashfall said. "Brownwhisker chose me to go to the Gathering tonight."

Windstorm frowned. "Keep an eye out for Shadowleap, will you? I'm really missing her. . . "

Ashfall nudged his mate. "I am too. You know, maybe I can get her to come meet us at the border!"

Just then, Riverwave appeared, her silver tabby coat shining in the sunlight. "You want to see Shadowleap?" She asked.

"Exactly."

"I think I know who can help."

"Who?"

"Lightningpaw."

"But he's StormClan!"

"And he's also my friend."

It was the Gathering and many cats clustered around. It was bitingly cold, and most cats didn't want to leave their faithful warm companions.
"Where's ShadeClan?" Emberglow asked. They had filled her in on their plan, and she had reluctantly agreed.

"Over there." Ashfall nodded towards one of the groups of cats. ShadeClan was mostly dark pelted since they were always in the shady pines.
There was no black pelt of Shadowleap, which wasn't very surprising since she had been so close to kitting.
Hawkstar jumped onto the giant ledge and sat. He lifted his head in pride and joy. *Probably because of Shadowleap.*

His large brown pelt ruffled in the wind, along with the other two leaders. Brownwhisker reluctantly jumped onto the ledge, immediately greeted by Vinestar and Mudstar- Hawkstar simply kept his distance.

"Let the Gathering begin!" Vinestar announced from where she was sitting.

Hawkstar stood to his paws. Mudstar seemed to protest, but Hawkstar stopped him. "ShadeClan is well and good. We have one new kit," *probably Shadowleap's,* "And she is healthy and strong. She is born to Shadowglare, my mate."

He changed her name? Why? Why is life so cruel?

"Although the seasons are getting colder, ShadeClan is well-fed. There have been no foxes or badgers in the territory." Hawkstar glanced at Mudstar, who went next.

"The Clan is doing brilliantly well. The prey runs very good for leaf-bare, and we have one new warrior- Thunderfur."
He announced.

"Thunderfur! Thunderfur!" StormClan chanted. Then EchoClan joined in.

As the Gathering went on, it was nothing but the usual. When it was over, the cats began to mingle.

Riverwave walked over to Ashfall and Emberglow, shaking her pelt against the cold. "Have you seen Lightningpaw?" Emberglow asked.

"Yes." Riverwave rolled her eyes. Then a slightly smaller head poked out from behind her.

"Hi. I'm Lightningpaw." He meowed.

"We've heard." Ashfall said. "Do you know about Shadowle- I mean Shadowglare?"

"Isn't she Hawkstar's mate or something? Of ShadeClan?" Lightningpaw asked.

"She was EchoClan. Until she fell for that . . . That stupid fox-heart. Will you help us? We need to get in contact with her."

"Of course." Lightningpaw agreed. "Any friend of Riverwave is a friend of mine."

Then Brownwhisker called. "It's time to leave! Gather together,

EchoClan!"

"We should really go," Riverwave purred. "Thanks, Lightningpaw. Meet by the border to talk more?"

Lightningpaw nodded. "Ok."

Then Lightningpaw left for StormClan, while Ashfall, Riverwave and Emberglow padded to Brownwhisker.
After, they began to walk home.

What an exciting day. I really hope that Lightningpaw can help- we need it.

Chapter 32

Shadowleap watched as her daughter suckled at her belly. She looked almost identical to Shadowleap- black with a blue eye. But the other eye was different. It was green. Shadowleap had named her Ravenkit after her beautiful black pelt. Hawkstar hadn't protested.
Shadowleap was starting to realize that ShadeClan wasn't all 'awesome' because Hawkstar had tried to change her name.
Even when she had told him not too.
Every day she was missing her sister more and more, but how could she escape, when she now had Ravenkit to worry about, as well as herself?

It's your fault, you stupid mouse-brain. You're the one who fell in love with Hawkstar. You're the one that agreed to come and live at ShadeClan. I should've stayed with my friends. I should've stayed with my sister . . .

Hawkstar hardly visited her anymore- it was like he was bored of her. Ravenkit let out a tiny mewl from beside her, and she nuzzled her kit. She put her head down and closed her eyes. *Oh, I'm so tired . . .*

Soon she awoke in a giant starry field. And there was Riverwave and some other cat she didn't know.
Riverwave stared at the cat. "Are you sure we've come to the right place? Have you ever done this before?"

"Have you?" The smaller cat replied.

"No." Her sister admitted, swiping a paw at her companion.
Then the silver tabby noticed her. "Hey, look! It is the right place, that's Shadowleap!"

Shadowleap wanted to run, but her feet were frozen to the spot.
Riverwave and the other cat ran forward, the looked as if they were racing.

"Shadowleap!" Riverwave squealed.

"What is it?" She asked.

"You *have* to come back!"

"Who is this? Your new apprentice?"

Riverwave looked like she was going to collapse in laughter.

"No, Shadowleap! This is the *StormClan* medicine cat apprentice! His names Lightningpaw. And about coming back, will you?"

"I can't. Ravenkit needs me. And Hawkstar wants me to stay."

"Aw! Is Ravenkit your kit!"

"Yes. She's a half-moon old now."

"But I want you to come back." Riverwave sighed.

"Maybe I will, but not yet."

Riverwave looked hurt, and began to fade away. Shadowleap didn't want her to go, but let her. "I love you." She whispered.

"I love you too."

We've been through so much, but now we're separated. And it's all my fault.

Chapter 33

Emberglow walked into the apprentices den. "Fluffpaw, wake up. We're going on the dawn patrol."

Immediately, the little yellow cat was on her paws. Her blue eyes gleamed in excitement. "With who?" She asked.

"Nighthowl and Weaselgrowl."

"Yes! That means I can show Weaselgrowl all my moves, while we're on patrol!" Fluffpaw exclaimed.

"Make sure you listen and scent, too. It's a *patrol* not a *brilliant-talent-show-of-Fluffpaw*."

"I know. I'm excited, can we go?" Fluffpaw was now bouncing from paw to paw in excitement.

"Yes." Emberglow answered. "You know, your father was my mentor."

"Really?"

"Yes, and he was a very good one, too."

Then the two cats padded to the camp entrance where Weaselgrowl and Nighthowl were already waiting. As soon as they arrived, Weaselgrowl snorted. "I thought you'd be in their forever." He meowed. "We were about to leave."

Fluffpaw sent a sharp look at her, but it was hard for Emberglow not to laugh. Her apprentice's *menacing* glare was really just like a newborn kits menacing glare. It was hilarious. "Well we made it." Emberglow said to everyone, but it was mostly meant for Fluffpaw.

As they walked into the forest Fluffpaw continued to jump excitedly. Weaselgrowl was the first to become angry. "Fluffpaw, if you don't stop, I'll send you straight back to camp!"

Fluffpaw looked hurt, but stopped her crazy moving. Her whiskers twitched as she watched her father talk to the older cats. Emberglow growled as they neared the IvyClan border. "They're not as bad as ShadeClan," Emberglow mewed. "But they're still an enemy Clan."

All along the border there was no scent. *Weird,* Emberglow thought. *Usually there's IvyClan scent by the IvyClan border . . . Because they have to mark it! Why aren't they here?*

"Uh oh." Nighthowl said. Her first words of the patrol.

What seemed to baffle everyone was the fact that IvyClan hadn't been here in days . . .

"We need to go to IvyClan camp!" Weaselgrowl yowled.

Emberglow turned to her apprentice. "Go back to camp. This might be dangerous."

Fluffpaw started to protest. "But why?"

"I don't need you getting hurt, and Pebblestar needs to know."

Fluffpaw flicked her tail proudly as she realized she wasn't just going to camp because she was too small and untrained.

As Fluffpaw pranced away, the other three cats crossed the border. They continued to smell for scent, but there was none.

Soon, they reached the IvyClan camp. They paused outside it. Emberglow sniffed. The scent engulfed them, and caused her to gag. They entered the camp to see sick cats lying everywhere.

"This is terrible!" Nighthowl said.

A cat slowly padded over. He seemed to be the least sick of all the cats. "Help . . . Us." He croaked. His eyes were crusted with yellow sleep, and his pelt was dirty and matted.

"What happened here?" Weaselgrowl asked.

"We . . . ShadeClan. They've been stealing our prey." The cat coughed and continued to speak. "We're becoming so starved, we're getting sick!"

Emberglow could see the desperation in this poor cats eyes. She didn't know what to do. "Who are you?" She asked.

"I'm . . . I'm Blackwhisker."

Shock overcame the group of cats. "Blackwhisker?" Nighthowl whimpered. Nighthowl had been a kit when Blackwhisker had left, and she undoubtedly felt uncomfortable about him.

"Yes, Nightkit."

Nighthowl bared her teeth. "I'm Nighthowl now, you fox-heart! You left our Clan! Brownwhisker and Bluewhisker will *not* want to help you."

"Maybe not me, but they have other friends here. Brokenyowl died yesterday . . . And Vinestar is on her last legs. Please help!"

Emberglow didn't know what to do. Nobody did. "We should ask Pebblestar first," She suggested.

"I agree." Nighthowl stepped up.

"I'll stay here." Weaselgrowl said. "You go home. I'll wait."

The two cats turned and ran as fast as they could to camp.

Chapter 34

Riverwave was talking to Chickfluff.

"I'm worried about my kits." The yellow she-cat admitted. "Is that normal? The other queens don't ever seem worried."

"Yes, it's perfectly normal. Don't worry. They're all in good paws." Riverwave told the worried queen.

Suddenly, Emberglow raced into the camp with the patrol following behind her. "Pebblestar! Pebblestar, IvyClan is sick! We have to help!"

Riverwave was shocked. IvyClan was sick, when they usually were the strongest Clan, sickness-wise anyway. She jumped to her paws and followed her friend to where Pebblestar was laying in her nest. "What?" The silver leader spoke in an annoyed way.

"We need your permission for Riverwave to come with us!"

Pebblestar looked confused, and Riverwave felt the same. *Oh, so I'm the cat that must heal them?*

Pebblestar growled. "What happened now?" She asked.

"We were patrolling IvyClan border. We came across no scent, which we thought was confusing so we entered the territory. Fluffpaw should have told you about that. Anyway, at the camp, cats were laying everywhere, sick. Their deputy died yesterday, and their leader is on her last life- and on her last legs of that life."

Pebblestar growled, her ears flicking. "Why?"

"We have no clue," Emberglow hurried. "We just need Riverwave. She may be able to help!"

Riverwave didn't wait for Pebblestar's response- she was already in her den gathering useful herbs. "Hmm... Catmint maybe. Or should I

bring watermint?" Eventually, the silver tabby decided on bringing as many leaves as possible and rushed out the den, ready to help IvyClan.

Emberglow was soon behind her, along with Bluewhisker following. The bundle in Riverwave's jaws began to dribble. *Oh no. I can't let the precious juices get away!*

She readjusted the leaves in her mouth, with an attempt to save the juice. Soon, the three cats neared the border. Emberglow plunged ahead, leading the way for Riverwave and Bluewhisker. Vines scattered across slim trails, and Riverwave could hardly see the sky above them. Occasionally, a bundle of giant thick leaves would fall from the canopy. Riverwave's legs never stopped.

Soon they reached the camp. Vinestar was in the centre, feebly clawing the ground. She looked like she was in a lot of pain. *This is terrible.*

Hacking coughs sounded in every direction. This didn't sound like green-cough. It was too different. . . . Many cats had running noses, most of which has puddles of snot beneath their muzzles. No cat made any movement as the EchoClan cats neared, besides coughing.

The cat named Brokenyowl- the IvyClan deputy was lying where he had died. These cats were much to weak to move- let alone bury a dead cat. Riverwave walked towards Vinestar. The creamy she-cat coughed up a glob of green snot as she approached. Then she sneezed, spraying it everywhere. A slow trickle of blood followed.

Catmint? What? I don't know. Riverwave unfolded the bundle, taking out medicines used for coughs, such as catmint and tansy. She chewed them thoroughly and spat them back into a leaf. She also mixed watermint with it.

She pawed some of the poultice into Vinestar's mouth, but the IvyClan leader didn't swallow.

"Fetch me some soaked moss." Riverwave ordered Emberglow.

The dark grey she-cat didn't question why, but ran off to find the

nearest stream.

"It's ok." Riverwave soothed. "You'll be ok. When she gets back, I'll trickle some water down your throat, and hen you have to swallow these, ok?"

Vinestar slightly moved her head. Riverwave suspected it was a nod. She left the weak leader alone and went to another cat.

The cat had swollen patches all along his pelt, and he looked like he was in a lot of pain. Riverwave took a bundle of feverfew from the pouch and gave it to him.

Soon Emberglow arrived again, with the bundle of dripping moss. Riverwave gave it to the weak leader, who lapped it up greedily. Then she began to tend to the other cats.

A cat called Hollymist blinked up at her as Riverwave gave the poultice. The cats black fur was matted from lack of grooming.

Riverwave helped the cats all day, and suddenly a voice came from behind her.

"We need to be cured," the IvyClan leader suddenly growled. "Can you leave us some herbs so we can care for ourselves? Our medicine cat is gone, dead and I don't know what to do. One of our kits has taken an interest in herbs. Shimmerkit, her name was. If you can find her, take her, and please teach her herbs."

Riverwave was surprised to hear the leader talk; her throat must be pretty sore.

"Well, of course I'll help. What does Shimmerkit look like?"

"She has long tortoiseshell fur. Her meow sounds very high pitched, and her mother died a few days ago. Bring her to me first if you find her."

Riverwave nodded and began to search for the lost kit.
"Shimmerkit!" She called out.

"Shimmerkit!" Riverwave's voice was starting to weaken. Would the

kit even be alright? She hadn't been cared for yet, and if she wasn't sound soon, she could easily succumb to the sickness.

"Shim-" She was in the middle of calling the kits name when she heard it. A sharp, clean meow.

"Help!" The meow said.

Riverwave followed the voice. She arrived to a kit, and picked her up by the scruff. The poor kit had been stuck in the hole this whole time.

Riverwave brought the kit to Vinestar, who had a few brief words for her. "You need to learn from Riverwave." The leader rasped. "She'll teach you all about plants, but you'll have to live with EchoClan for a while. When you're done your training you can come back and live with us again. Ok?"

"Yah." Was all the kit said.

Riverwave fold the leader how to use the herbs, and where she would find them the best. Then she left, carrying the kit with her.

Chapter 35

Ashfall was at camp. He grumpily swished his tail back and forth, back and forth, waiting for Riverwave to come back to camp. Even Windstorm, his mate, seemed to be annoyed by his angry demeanour. When she finally did, he was delighted.

Except for a few things.

For one, she'd brought back a kit. For what reason exactly? Ashfall didn't know.

Also, it was already dark.

"Who is this?" He puffed up.

"Shimmerkit. I'm to train her. You know, half of IvyClan is dead and stuff. They kinda need a medicine cat. Please don't get mad."

Ashfall decided not to be to angry.

"We need to talk to Shadowleap tonight." Ashfall said.

Riverwave nodded, brushing past him. The grey tomcat quickly followed, examining his claws.

In the leaders den, Shimmerkit was named Shimmerpaw, and Pebblestar immediately agreed to the plan.

"IvyClan is important." Pebblestar had rasped. "We need them to have a medicine cat."

Shimmerpaw seemed happy that she was welcomed.

After they were done, Riverwave brought Shimmerpaw to the medicine den and gave her a nest. When she emerged from the cave, Ashfall was completely ready.

They settled down

"Let us see Shadowleap." Riverwave meowed.

Ashfall closed his eyes and rested against the hope of seeing his friend.

They arrived in a meadow with Shadowleap in it. Her moon old kit- Ravenkit- was scampering through the meadow, staring in awe at the little things of life.

"Hi guys," Shadowleap purred, walking towards them.

"So, have you decided yet?" Riverwave's silver pelt rippled with excitement. "You have to come back!"

"Nope." Shadowleap said. "I haven't thought about it at all. At all. . . . "

"Come on," Ashfall snorted. "I know you have."

"Yes. I have. It's just so hard to decide. I mean, I do care about Hawkstar and what if this would just cause more problems for our Clan? Hawkstar could try to steal Ravenkit back! I want my kit to have a peaceful life." Shadowleap reasoned.

"She could have a peaceful life back in EchoClan." Ashfall meowed. "We wouldn't let Hawkstar steal her. I'd rather die."

Riverwave was nodding along with Ashfall's words. "It's true. Everybody back home wants you to come back, even Cloudswirl-"

"I doubt it." Shadowleap argued. "I betrayed him. There's no reason he would ever want me back. That's impossible."

"He still loves you." Ashfall meowed softly. "He's forgiven you for all the bad things you did to him. He still talks about you."

Shadowleap's ears perked a little. "Maybe."

Riverwave looked up at the black she-cat; she'd been looking at the ground. "Can you please come back? I'm begging you!"

"What would you do if I told you Ravenkit isn't Hawkstar's?"

Shadowleap blurted out the question.

"She isn't?" Riverwave frowned. "Is she Cloudswirl's?"

Shadowleap nodded her head. "Yeah, she is. See? I'm terrible. I even lied about that one."

"That's just more reason to come back!" Ashfall said. "Cloudswirl would love to see his daughter."

"Well, I'll think about it." Shadowleap said.

"That's what you said last time!" Ashfall growled. "You better think pretty fast, or I'll come straight over to ShadeClan myself, and take you!"

None of the cats had even thought about the prophecy and as the black she-cat faded away, Ashfall could feel his dreaming self enter a different kind of sleep. This kind had no dreams, just blackness.

It was a time to think. . . .

Chapter 36

Shadowleap's brain was overloading. Should she go? Or not. Was it a safe bet? Or was it not. Would they really protect her from Hawkstar- could they even? Were they strong enough to face the ShadeClan empire?

Her mind continued to race as she woke to Ravenkit's claws. They pierced at her shoulder fur, snagging it, dragging it back. The little kit always did this.

Shadowleap pulled herself to her feet and looked at Ravenkit. "Hewwooooo!" Said the kit.

"Hello, my favourite kit." Shadowleap said. It was at that time she made her decision. "We're going to play a little game today."

"What kind of game?" The shining blue eyes pleaded.

"It's this game where we run away from ShadeClan- and Hawkstar. Forever!"

"For real forever? That's a really long time, Momma. Are you sure you want to do that?" Ravenkit was smarter than she seemed.

"Well, there's this goal. We have to get to EchoClan, who's right across the border. They offered to take us in. Ok?"

Ravenkit, who was all for adventures, leapt to her feet, and scurried out the den.

"Don't forget, we have to be super quiet!" Shadowleap told her baby, who immediately stepped softly.

So they went. They stalked out of the camp and through the tangles of ivy and shrubs. Ravenkit bragged, for she had only snagged two leaves on her fur.

Shadowleap was nervous about what could happen. Would her

home Clan really welcome her? Or would they push her away, call her a traitor and take her kit?

Once they were in EchoClan territory, Shadowleap paused. She inhaled all the smells, including her ex-Clanmates.

They crossed the old patrols scent trails, Ravenkit curiously sniffing at it. Shadowleap informed her daughter. "That's the patrols trail."

When they were getting close to the camp, a voice spoke. "Who's there?"

Shadowleap recognized the male voice as Cloudswirl. Her true love, mate and her kits father. She opened her mouth. "Hello, my love."

Cloudswirl let put a growl and came into view. "Is it really you? The one who betrayed me and broke my heart? What do you want?" He let out a ferocious hiss.

Shadowleap hesitantly pushed the cowering kit in front of her. "This. . . . " she motioned towards her kit. "Is also yours. She's not really Hawkstar's. I'm really sorry. I caused so much trouble. I wanted inside information from Hawkstar, that was honestly all. I just didn't know what to do! It's so weird and different there, I hated it the first day. The only cat who even welcomed me at all was Oakpool. She was their medicine cat."

"Woah woah woah," Cloudswirl meowed. "This kit is mine? You mean, this is partly me? Are you serious?" The tomcat seemed completely mesmerized.

"Yes." Shadowleap sighed. "And if you don't mind, I want to come back to EchoClan and raise her with her proper father."

"What's her name?" Cloudswirl completely skipped her question.

"Ravenkit."

"Beautiful. Now come with me. I need to tell the whole Clan before patrols leave!"

They raced to the camp. Cloudswirl jumped to the leaders den- to

inform Pebblestar, Shadowleao guessed.

Then he came out with the silver leader.

"Let all cats old enough to catch their own prey gather beneath the High Peak for a Clan meeting!"

The old leaders eyes met with Shadowleap's and she nodded. As cats began to gather, she heard murmurings of; "What could be so important this early?", and "why is she calling a meeting?"

Shadowleap was told to get on the High Peak, and so she did. Pebblestar was excited to start her ceremony.

"This morning Cloudswirl was out hunting for the Clan. He didn't bring back any prey, but he did find Shadowleap and her young kit, called Ravenkit. Shadowleap wanted to come back, and this is supposedly going to help us against Hawkstar or something. It is also said that she was only in ShadeClan to get inside information. It's confusing, but can you please yowl if you want Shadowleap to stay!"

Many yowls were heard. Shadowleap had always liked to think that she was important to EchoClan, but she never suspected they would be this excited, especially after she had just left for two moons.

When Pebblestar asked if any cats didn't want her to stay, only a few cats spoke up.

Weaselgrowl was one of them. "She left us for that mangy leader. I don't think she should be welcome."

Shadowleap had nothing against them, though. They were just being completely reasonable. That was exactly how she'd react to a Clanmate leaving.

When it was confirmed she stay in EchoClan with Ravenkit, a wild messenger came rushing in through the camp entrance. It was Oakpool.

"Hawkstar left us today to go looking for Shadowleap and his kit." She gasped. "We found his body floating in the stream. There is no

wounds to suggest a cat did it. We think he drowned."

Oakpool looked to the High Peak. When she saw Shadowleap, she widened her eyes.

"I knew you'd go back to EchoClan eventually, but I didn't suspect that Hawkstar would drown trying to find you."

"I'm sorry." Shadowleap dipped her head.

"I cared for Hawkstar, I did, but you've left us in the pass of a better leader. She wants everything better for our Clans. All hail Mothstar!" Oakpool said, her voice quivering a bit.

Pebblestar bounced with excitement. "Shadowleap, you just solved the prophecy! It said only you could save us! And you did just that. Hawkstar was going to kill us all, but he's dead now, because you came back to EchoClan. Thank you."

Shadowleap had never expected she would be standing on top of the High Peak, being thanked by her Clan, but she'd also never suspected that she'd live in ShadeClan for two moons. Life was a crazy ride for Shadowleap and her friends.

And she could only hope it wouldn't be the same for her dear kit.

Author's Note

[image]

Wooooooooooowwww!

The Shadow Glare was an interesting book for me to write, but I'm not going to lie. After a while, I got stumped. Majorly. Like, in the major league of majorly.

I had no idea what to do next. Whenever I tried to write I'd get stuck.

And then there was that one day I was like: I'm going to spend all day writing the end of this book, whether I like it or not. And I did!

I'd like to thank Willowstar24 for helping me with the names of many characters and part of the story.

Angel_of_death1234 also helped with some of the names. I was just weird and forgot to mention it earlier in this book.
Give them a follow ^^^^

Thanks to anyone who read and voted on my story! Here's a few questions for you. I'm going to answer them myself, and you can answer them in the comment section if you want:P

Who was your favourite character in this book and why?

My favourite character is Riverwave. I love her personality and I think she's the nicest of the four friends. She has a tender heart and cares for her sister very much. If Riverwave was a person, I think she'd be the one who helps everyone and doesn't hold grudges. That is like me, and it's my weakness. I forgive people to easily. Pebblestar is a close second. She's just a really strong leader, and I think that she makes really wise decisions. I always get excited when I write about her.

Lightningpaw is pretty cool too.

Who's your least favourite character in the book (can be any character)?

The cat that I probably dislike the most. . . . Hmm. That's a hard one. Probably Hawkstar, because you know. He's kind of evil and stuff like that. But even he is okay.

Which Clan is your favourite?

It's a close one between EchoClan and StormClan. I like EchoClan because it's where most of the story is based, and my favourite character lives there. EchoClan lives in a ravine with the High Peak, which makes echoes when you talk. I like StormClan because of Mudstar and Lightningpaw. Mudstar's personality I find just hilarious, and Lightningpaw is just so sweet. Seriously. Just look into his little yellow face and try not to smile.

Now tell me that Lightningpaw isn't absolutely adorable.
I also think that rain is really awesome and StormClan has that so I think I'd just like it more.

Some more questions for you:

What other warrior books do you think I should write?

Any book reading requests for me?

Do you think there's anything I should work on in this story?

Now what's an author without some self-advertising?! 😊

Other books by me:

All Alone: A cats mate got killed in a storm. Now she's alone and has to work hard against monsters. This book was written before this one, but I think it's pretty good and deserves a mention.

Raisintail Saves The Day: another one of those cliche warrior cat books. A few of my readers seemed to like it a lot. It's not very long, but it's stupid and funny.

Twiggy: this book isn't warriors, but it's cats, so. It has much better

writing in it: it's linger and has more descriptive words and stuff. If you'd like to check it out that'd be great.

Don't Be Afraid- It'll Be Fine: this book is about a dragonet who's mother got stolen when she was young. She was taken to an orphanage and now she's on a mission to find her lost mother. This one is new so it's not that long yet, but I have a really good plot for the story planned out.

I have some more books, but I don't feel like any of them are that great so I don't want to talk about them.